

AN ACCOUNT OF SOME STRANGE DISTURBANCES IN AUNGIER STREET

It is not worth telling, this story of mine — at least, not worth writing. Told, indeed, as I have sometimes been called upon to tell it, to a circle of intelligent and eager faces, lighted up by a good after-dinner fire on a winter's evening, with a cold wind rising and wailing outside, and all snug and cosy within, it has gone off — though I say it, who should not — indifferent well. But it is a venture to do as you would have me. Pen, ink, and paper are cold vehicles for the marvellous, and a “reader” decidedly a more critical animal than a “listener.” If, however, you can induce your friends to read it after nightfall, and when the fireside talk has run for a while on thrilling tales of shapeless terror; in short, if you will secure me the *mollia tempora fandi*, I will go to my work, and say my say, with better heart. Well, then, these conditions presupposed, I shall waste no more words, but tell you simply how it all happened.

My cousin (Tom Ludlow) and I studied medicine together. I think he would have succeeded, had he stuck to the profession; but he preferred the Church, poor fellow, and died early, a sacrifice to contagion, contracted in the noble discharge of his duties. For my present purpose, I say enough of his character when I mention that he was of a sedate but frank and cheerful nature; very exact in his observance of truth, and not by any means like myself — of an excitable or nervous temperament.

My Uncle Ludlow — Tom's father — while we were attending lectures, purchased three or four old houses in Aungier Street, one of which was unoccupied. *He* resided in the country, and Tom proposed that we should take up our abode in the untenanted house, so long as it should continue unlet; a move which would accomplish the double end of settling us nearer alike to our lecture-rooms and to our amusements, and of relieving us from the weekly charge of rent for our lodgings.

Our furniture was very scant — our whole equipage remarkably modest and primitive; and, in short, our arrangements pretty nearly as simple as those of a bivouac. Our new plan was, therefore, executed almost as soon as conceived. The front drawingroom was our sitting-room. I had the bedroom over it, and Tom the back bedroom on the same floor, which nothing could have induced me to occupy.

The house, to begin with, was a very old one. It had been, I believe, newly fronted about fifty years before; but with this exception, it had nothing modern about it. The agent who bought it and looked into the titles for my uncle, told me that it was sold, along with much other forfeited property, at Chichester House, I think, in 1702; and had belonged to Sir Thomas Hacket, who was Lord Mayor of Dublin in James II.'s time. How old it was *then*, I can't say; but, at all events, it had seen years and changes enough to have contracted all that mysterious and saddened air, at once exciting and depressing, which belongs to most old mansions.

There had been very little done in the way of modernising details; and, perhaps, it was better so; for there was something queer and by-gone in the very walls and ceilings — in the shape of doors and windows — in the odd diagonal site of the chimneypieces — in the beams and ponderous cornices — not to mention the singular solidity of all the woodwork, from the banisters to the window-frames, which hopelessly defied disguise, and would have emphatically proclaimed their antiquity through any conceivable amount of modern finery and varnish.

An effort had, indeed, been made, to the extent of papering the drawingrooms; but somehow, the paper looked raw and out of keeping; and the old woman, who kept a little dirt-pie of a shop in the lane, and whose daughter — a girl of two and fifty — was our solitary handmaid, coming in at sunrise, and chastely receding again as soon as she had made all ready for tea in our state apartment; — this woman, I say, remembered it, when old Judge Horrocks (who, having earned the reputation of a particularly “hanging judge,” ended by hanging himself, as the coroner's jury found, under an impulse of “temporary insanity,” with a child's skipping-rope, over the massive old bannisters) resided there, entertaining good company, with fine venison and rare old port. In those halcyon days, the drawingrooms were hung with gilded leather, and, I dare say, cut a good figure, for they were really spacious rooms.

The bedrooms were wainscoted, but the front one was not gloomy; and in it the cosiness of antiquity quite overcame its sombre associations. But the back bedroom, with its two queerly-placed melancholy windows, staring vacantly at the foot of the bed, and with the shadowy recess to be found in most old houses in Dublin, like a large ghostly closet, which, from congeniality of temperament, had amalgamated with the bedchamber, and dissolved the partition. At night-time, this “alcove” — as our “maid” was wont to call it — had, in my eyes, a specially sinister and suggestive character. Tom's distant and solitary candle glimmered vainly into its darkness. *There* it was always overlooking him — always itself impenetrable. But this was only part of the effect. The whole room was, I can't tell how, repulsive to me. There was, I suppose, in its proportions and features, a latent discord — a certain mysterious and indescribable relation, which jarred indistinctly upon some secret sense of the fitting and the safe, and raised indefinable suspicions and apprehensions of the imagination. On the whole, as I began by saying, nothing could have induced me to pass a night alone in it.

I had never pretended to conceal from poor Tom my superstitious weakness; and he, on the other hand, most unaffectedly ridiculed my tremors. The sceptic was, however, destined to receive a lesson, as you shall hear.

We had not been very long in occupation of our respective dormitories, when I began to complain of uneasy nights and disturbed sleep. I was, I suppose, the more impatient under this annoyance, as I was usually a sound sleeper, and by no means prone to nightmares. It was now, however, my destiny, instead of enjoying my customary repose, every night to “sup full of horrors.” After a preliminary course of disagreeable and frightful dreams, my troubles took a definite form, and the same vision, without an appreciable variation in a single detail, visited me at least (on an average) every second night in the week.

Now, this dream, nightmare, or infernal illusion — which you please — of which I was the miserable sport, was on this wise: —

I saw, or thought I saw, with the most abominable distinctness, although at the time in profound darkness, every article of furniture and accidental arrangement of the chamber in which I lay. This, as you know, is incidental to ordinary nightmare. Well, while in this clairvoyant condition, which seemed but the lighting up of the theatre in which was to be exhibited the monotonous tableau of horror, which made my nights insupportable, my attention invariably became, I know not why, fixed upon the

windows opposite the foot of my bed; and, uniformly with the same effect, a sense of dreadful anticipation always took slow but sure possession of me. I became somehow conscious of a sort of horrid but undefined preparation going forward in some unknown quarter, and by some unknown agency, for my torment; and, after an interval, which always seemed to me of the same length, a picture suddenly flew up to the window, where it remained fixed, as if by an electrical attraction, and my discipline of horror then commenced, to last perhaps for hours. The picture thus mysteriously glued to the window-panes, was the portrait of an old man, in a crimson flowered silk dressing-gown, the folds of which I could now describe, with a countenance embodying a strange mixture of intellect, sensuality, and power, but withal sinister and full of malignant omen. His nose was hooked, like the beak of a vulture; his eyes large, grey, and prominent, and lighted up with a more than mortal cruelty and coldness. These features were surmounted by a crimson velvet cap, the hair that peeped from under which was white with age, while the eyebrows retained their original blackness. Well I remember every line, hue, and shadow of that stony countenance, and well I may! The gaze of this hellish visage was fixed upon me, and mine returned it with the inexplicable fascination of nightmare, for what appeared to me to be hours of agony. At last —

The cock he crew, away then flew

the fiend who had enslaved me through the awful watches of the night; and, harassed and nervous, I rose to the duties of the day.

I had — I can't say exactly why, but it may have been from the exquisite anguish and profound impressions of unearthly horror, with which this strange phantasmagoria was associated — an insurmountable antipathy to describing the exact nature of my nightly troubles to my friend and comrade. Generally, however, I told him that I was haunted by abominable dreams; and, true to the imputed materialism of medicine, we put our heads together to dispel my horrors, not by exorcism, but by a tonic.

I will do this tonic justice, and frankly admit that the accursed portrait began to intermit its visits under its influence. What of that? Was this singular apparition — as full of character as of terror — therefore the creature of my fancy, or the invention of my poor stomach? Was it, in short, *subjective* (to borrow the technical slang of the day) and not the palpable aggression and intrusion of an external agent? That, good friend, as we will both admit, by no means follows. The evil spirit, who enthralled my senses in the shape of that portrait, may have been just as near me, just as energetic, just as malignant, though I saw him not. What means the whole moral code of revealed religion regarding the due keeping of our own bodies, soberness, temperance, etc.? here is an obvious connexion between the material and the invisible; the healthy tone of the system, and its unimpaired energy, may, for aught we can tell, guard us against influences which would otherwise render life itself terrific. The mesmerist and the electrobiologist will fail upon an average with nine patients out of ten — so may the evil spirit. Special conditions of the corporeal system are indispensable to the production of certain spiritual phenomena. The operation succeeds sometimes — sometimes fails — that is all.

I found afterwards that my would-be sceptical companion had his troubles too. But of these I knew nothing yet. One night, for a wonder, I was sleeping soundly, when I was roused by a step on the lobby outside my room, followed by the loud clang of what turned out to be a large brass candlestick, flung with all his force by poor Tom Ludlow over the banisters, and rattling with a rebound down the second flight of stairs; and almost concurrently with this, Tom burst open my door, and bounced into my room backwards, in a state of extraordinary agitation.

I had jumped out of bed and clutched him by the arm before I had any distinct idea of my own whereabouts. There we were — in our shirts — standing before the open door — staring through the great old banister opposite, at the lobby window, through which the sickly light of a clouded moon was gleaming.

"What's the matter, Tom? What's the matter with you? What the devil's the matter with you, Tom?" I demanded shaking him with nervous impatience.

He took a long breath before he answered me, and then it was not very coherently.

"It's nothing, nothing at all — did I speak? — what did I say? — where's the candle, Richard? It's dark; I — I had a candle!"

"Yes, dark enough," I said; "but what's the matter? — what *is* it? — why don't you speak, Tom? — have you lost your wits? — what is the matter?"

"The matter? — oh, it is all over. It must have been a dream — nothing at all but a dream — don't you think so? It could not be anything more than a dream."

"Of *course*" said I, feeling uncommonly nervous, "it *was* a dream."

"I thought," he said, "there was a man in my room, and — and I jumped out of bed; and — and — where's the candle?"

"In your room, most likely," I said, "shall I go and bring it?"

"No; stay here — don't go; it's no matter — don't, I tell you; it was all a dream. Bolt the door, Dick; I'll stay here with you — I feel nervous. So, Dick, like a good fellow, light your candle and open the window — I am in a *shocking state*."

I did as he asked me, and robing himself like Granuaile in one of my blankets, he seated himself close beside my bed.

Every body knows how contagious is fear of all sorts, but more especially that particular kind of fear under which poor Tom was at that moment labouring. I would not have heard, nor I believe would he have recapitulated, just at that moment, for half the world, the details of the hideous vision which had so unmanned him.

"Don't mind telling me anything about your nonsensical dream, Tom," said I, affecting contempt, really in a panic; "let us talk about something else; but it is quite plain that this dirty old house disagrees with us both, and hang me if I stay here any longer, to be pestered with indigestion and — and — bad nights, so we may as well look out for lodgings — don't you think so? — at once."

Tom agreed, and, after an interval, said —

"I have been thinking, Richard, that it is a long time since I saw my father, and I have made up my mind to go down tomorrow and return in a day or two, and you can take rooms for us in the meantime."

I fancied that this resolution, obviously the result of the vision which had so profoundly scared him, would probably vanish next morning with the damps and shadows of night. But I was mistaken. Off went Tom at peep of day to the country, having agreed that so soon as I had secured suitable lodgings, I was to recall him by letter from his visit to my Uncle Ludlow.

Now, anxious as I was to change my quarters, it so happened, owing to a series of petty procrastinations and accidents, that nearly a week elapsed before my bargain was made and my letter of recall on the wing to Tom; and, in the meantime, a trifling adventure or two had occurred to your humble servant, which, absurd as they now appear, diminished by distance, did certainly at the time serve to whet my appetite for change considerably.

A night or two after the departure of my comrade, I was sitting by my bedroom fire, the door locked, and the ingredients of a tumbler of hot whisky-punch upon the crazy spider-table; for, as the best mode of keeping the

Black spirits and white,
Blue spirits and grey,

with which I was environed, at bay, I had adopted the practice recommended by the wisdom of my ancestors, and “kept my spirits up by pouring spirits down.” I had thrown aside my volume of Anatomy, and was treating myself by way of a tonic, preparatory to my punch and bed, to half-a-dozen pages of the *Spectator*, when I heard a step on the flight of stairs descending from the attics. It was two o’clock, and the streets were as silent as a churchyard — the sounds were, therefore, perfectly distinct. There was a slow, heavy tread, characterised by the emphasis and deliberation of age, descending by the narrow staircase from above; and, what made the sound more singular, it was plain that the feet which produced it were perfectly bare, measuring the descent with something between a pound and a flop, very ugly to hear.

I knew quite well that my attendant had gone away many hours before, and that nobody but myself had any business in the house. It was quite plain also that the person who was coming down stairs had no intention whatever of concealing his movements; but, on the contrary, appeared disposed to make even more noise, and proceed more deliberately, than was at all necessary. When the step reached the foot of the stairs outside my room, it seemed to stop; and I expected every moment to see my door open spontaneously, and give admission to the original of my detested portrait. I was, however, relieved in a few seconds by hearing the descent renewed, just in the same manner, upon the staircase leading down to the drawingrooms, and thence, after another pause, down the next flight, and so on to the hall, whence I heard no more.

Now, by the time the sound had ceased, I was wound up, as they say, to a very unpleasant pitch of excitement. I listened, but there was not a stir. I screwed up my courage to a decisive experiment — opened my door, and in a stentorian voice bawled over the banisters, “Who’s there?” There was no answer but the ringing of my own voice through the empty old house, — no renewal of the movement; nothing, in short, to give my unpleasant sensations a definite direction. There is, I think, something most disagreeably disenchanting in the sound of one’s own voice under such circumstances, exerted in solitude, and in vain. It redoubled my sense of isolation, and my misgivings increased on perceiving that the door, which I certainly thought I had left open, was closed behind me; in a vague alarm, lest my retreat should be cut off, I got again into my room as quickly as I could, where I remained in a state of imaginary blockade, and very uncomfortable indeed, till morning.

Next night brought no return of my barefooted fellow-lodger; but the night following, being in my bed, and in the dark — somewhere, I suppose, about the same hour as before, I distinctly heard the old fellow again descending from the garrets.

This time I had had my punch, and the *morale* of the garrison was consequently excellent. I jumped out of bed, clutched the poker as I passed the expiring fire, and in a moment was upon the lobby. The sound had ceased by this time — the dark and chill were discouraging; and, guess my horror, when I saw, or thought I saw, a black monster, whether in the shape of a man or a bear I could not say, standing, with its back to the wall, on the lobby, facing me, with a pair of great greenish eyes shining dimly out. Now, I must be frank, and confess that the cupboard which displayed our plates and cups stood just there, though at the moment I did not recollect it. At the same time I must honestly say, that making every allowance for an excited imagination, I never could satisfy myself that I was made the dupe of my own fancy in this matter; for this apparition, after one or two shiftings of shape, as if in the act of incipient transformation, began, as it seemed on second thoughts, to advance upon me in its original form. From an instinct of terror rather than of courage, I hurled the poker, with all my force, at its head; and to the music of a horrid crash made my way into my room, and double-locked the door. Then, in a minute more, I heard the horrid bare feet walk down the stairs, till the sound ceased in the hall, as on the former occasion.

If the apparition of the night before was an ocular delusion of my fancy sporting with the dark outlines of our cupboard, and if its horrid eyes were nothing but a pair of inverted teacups, I had, at all events, the satisfaction of having launched the poker with admirable effect, and in true “fancy” phrase, “knocked its two daylights into one,” as the commingled fragments of my tea-service testified. I did my best to gather comfort and courage from these evidences; but it would not do. And then what could I say of those horrid bare feet, and the regular tramp, tramp, tramp, which measured the distance of the entire staircase through the solitude of my haunted dwelling, and at an hour when no good influence was stirring? Confound it! — the whole affair was abominable. I was out of spirits, and dreaded the approach of night.

It came, ushered ominously in with a thunderstorm and dull torrents of depressing rain. Earlier than usual the streets grew silent; and by twelve o’clock nothing but the comfortless pattering of the rain was to be heard.

I made myself as snug as I could. I lighted *two* candles instead of one. I forswore bed, and held myself in readiness for a sally, candle in hand; for, *coûte qui coûte*, I was resolved to see the being, if visible at all, who troubled the nightly stillness of my mansion. I was fidgetty and nervous and tried in vain to interest myself with my books. I walked up and down my room, whistling in turn martial and hilarious music, and listening ever and anon for the dreaded noise. I sat down and stared at the square label on the solemn and reserved-looking black bottle, until “FLANAGAN & CO’S BEST OLD MALT WHISKY” grew into a sort of subdued accompaniment to all the fantastic and horrible speculations which chased one another through my brain.

Silence, meanwhile, grew more silent, and darkness darker. I listened in vain for the rumble of a vehicle, or the dull clamour of a distant row. There was nothing but the sound of a rising wind, which had succeeded the thunderstorm that had travelled over the Dublin mountains quite out of hearing. In the middle of this great city I began to feel myself alone with nature, and Heaven knows what beside. My courage was ebbing. Punch, however, which makes beasts of so many, made a man of me again — just in time to hear with tolerable nerve and firmness the lumpy, flabby, naked feet deliberately descending the stairs again.

I took a candle, not without a tremour. As I crossed the floor I tried to extemporise a prayer, but stopped short to listen, and never finished it. The steps continued. I confess I hesitated for some seconds at the door before I took heart of grace and opened it. When I peeped out the lobby was perfectly empty — there was no monster standing on the staircase; and as the detested sound ceased, I was reassured enough to venture forward nearly to the banisters. Horror of horrors! within a stair or two beneath the spot where I stood the unearthly tread smote the floor. My eye caught something in motion; it was about the size of Goliath's foot — it was grey, heavy, and flapped with a dead weight from one step to another. As I am alive, it was the most monstrous grey rat I ever beheld or imagined.

Shakespeare says — “Some men there are cannot abide a gaping pig, and some that are mad if they behold a cat.” I went wellnigh out of my wits when I beheld this *rat*; for, laugh at me as you may, it fixed upon me, I thought, a perfectly human expression of malice; and, as it shuffled about and looked up into my face almost from between my feet, I saw, I could swear it — I felt it then, and know it now, the infernal gaze and the accursed countenance of my old friend in the portrait, transfused into the visage of the bloated vermin before me.

I bounced into my room again with a feeling of loathing and horror I cannot describe, and locked and bolted my door as if a lion had been at the other side. D — n him or *it*; curse the portrait and its original! I felt in my soul that the rat — yes, the *rat*, the RAT I had just seen, was that evil being in masquerade, and rambling through the house upon some infernal night lark.

Next morning I was early trudging through the miry streets; and, among other transactions, posted a peremptory note recalling Tom. On my return, however, I found a note from my absent “chum,” announcing his intended return next day. I was doubly rejoiced at this, because I had succeeded in getting rooms; and because the change of scene and return of my comrade were rendered specially pleasant by the last night's half ridiculous half horrible adventure.

I slept extemporaneously in my new quarters in Digges' Street that night, and next morning returned for breakfast to the haunted mansion, where I was certain Tom would call immediately on his arrival.

I was quite right — he came; and almost his first question referred to the primary object of our change of residence.

“Thank God,” he said with genuine fervour, on hearing that all was arranged. “On *your* account I am delighted. As to myself, I assure you that no earthly consideration could have induced me ever again to pass a night in this disastrous old house.”

“Confound the house!” I ejaculated, with a genuine mixture of fear and detestation, “we have not had a pleasant hour since we came to live here”; and so I went on, and related incidentally my adventure with the plethoric old rat.

“Well, if that were *all*,” said my cousin, affecting to make light of the matter, “I don't think I should have minded it very much.”

“Ay, but its eye — its countenance, my dear Tom,” urged I; “if you had seen *that*, you would have felt it might be *anything* but what it seemed.”

“I inclined to think the best conjurer in such a case would be an able-bodied cat,” he said, with a provoking chuckle.

“But let us hear your own adventure,” I said tartly.

At this challenge he looked uneasily round him. I had poked up a very unpleasant recollection.

“You shall hear it, Dick; I'll tell it to you,” he said. “Begad, sir, I should feel quite queer, though, telling it *here*, though we are too strong a body for ghosts to meddle with just now.”

Though he spoke this like a joke, I think it was serious calculation. Our Hebe was in a corner of the room, packing our cracked delft tea and dinner-services in a basket. She soon suspended operations, and with mouth and eyes wide open became an absorbed listener. Tom's experiences were told nearly in these words: —

“I saw it three times, Dick — three distinct times; and I am perfectly certain it meant me some infernal harm. I was, I say, in danger — in *extreme* danger; for, if nothing else had happened, my reason would most certainly have failed me, unless I had escaped so soon. Thank God. I *did* escape.

“The first night of this hateful disturbance, I was lying in the attitude of sleep, in that lumbering old bed. I hate to think of it. I was really wide awake, though I had put out my candle, and was lying as quietly as if I had been asleep; and although accidentally restless, my thoughts were running in a cheerful and agreeable channel.

“I think it must have been two o'clock at least when I thought I heard a sound in that — that odious dark recess at the far end of the bedroom. It was as if someone was drawing a piece of cord slowly along the floor, lifting it up, and dropping it softly down again in coils. I sat up once or twice in my bed, but could see nothing, so I concluded it must be mice in the wainscot. I felt no emotion graver than curiosity, and after a few minutes ceased to observe it.

“While lying in this state, strange to say; without at first a suspicion of anything supernatural, on a sudden I saw an old man, rather stout and square, in a sort of roan-red dressing-gown, and with a black cap on his head, moving stiffly and slowly in a diagonal direction, from the recess, across the floor of the bedroom, passing my bed at the foot, and entering the lumber-closet at the left. He had something under his arm; his head hung a little at one side; and, merciful God! when I saw his face.”

Tom stopped for a while, and then said —

“That awful countenance, which living or dying I never can forget, disclosed what he was. Without turning to the right or left, he passed beside me, and entered the closet by the bed's head.

“While this fearful and indescribable type of death and guilt was passing, I felt that I had no more power to speak or stir than if I had been myself a corpse. For hours after it had disappeared, I was too terrified and weak to move. As soon as daylight came, I took courage, and examined the room, and especially the course which the frightful intruder had seemed to take, but there was not a vestige to indicate anybody's having passed there; no sign of any disturbing agency visible among the lumber that strewed the floor of the closet.

“I now began to recover a little. I was fagged and exhausted, and at last, overpowered by a feverish sleep. I came down late; and finding you out of spirits, on account of your dreams about the portrait, whose *original* I am now certain disclosed himself to me, I did not care to talk about the infernal vision. In fact, I was trying to persuade myself that the whole thing was an illusion, and I did not like to revive in their intensity the hated impressions of the past night — or to risk the constancy of my scepticism, by recounting the tale of my sufferings.

"It required some nerve, I can tell you, to go to my haunted chamber next night, and lie down quietly in the same bed," continued Tom. "I did so with a degree of trepidation, which, I am not ashamed to say, a very little matter would have sufficed to stimulate to downright panic. This night, however, passed off quietly enough, as also the next; and so too did two or three more. I grew more confident, and began to fancy that I believed in the theories of spectral illusions, with which I had at first vainly tried to impose upon my convictions.

"The apparition had been, indeed, altogether anomalous. It had crossed the room without any recognition of my presence: I had not disturbed *it*, and *it* had no mission to *me*. What, then, was the imaginable use of its crossing the room in a visible shape at all? Of course it might have *been* in the closet instead of *going* there, as easily as it introduced itself into the recess without entering the chamber in a shape discernible by the senses. Besides, how the deuce *had* I seen it? It was a dark night; I had no candle; there was no fire; and yet I saw it as distinctly, in colouring and outline, as ever I beheld human form! A cataleptic dream would explain it all; and I was determined that a dream it should be.

"One of the most remarkable phenomena connected with the practice of mendacity is the vast number of deliberate lies we tell ourselves, whom, of all persons, we can least expect to deceive. In all this, I need hardly tell you, Dick, I was simply lying to myself, and did not believe one word of the wretched humbug. Yet I went on, as men will do, like persevering charlatans and impostors, who tire people into credulity by the mere force of reiteration; so I hoped to win myself over at last to a comfortable scepticism about the ghost.

"He had not appeared a second time — that certainly was a comfort; and what, after all, did I care for him, and his queer old toggery and strange looks? Not a fig! I was nothing the worse for having seen him, and a good story the better. So I tumbled into bed, put out my candle, and, cheered by a loud drunken quarrel in the back lane, went fast asleep.

"From this deep slumber I awoke with a start. I knew I had had a horrible dream; but what it was I could not remember. My heart was thumping furiously; I felt bewildered and feverish; I sat up in the bed and looked about the room. A broad flood of moonlight came in through the curtainless window; everything was as I had last seen it; and though the domestic squabble in the back lane was, unhappily for me, allayed, I yet could hear a pleasant fellow singing, on his way home, the then popular comic ditty called, 'Murphy Delany.' Taking advantage of this diversion I lay down again, with my face towards the fireplace, and closing my eyes, did my best to think of nothing else but the song, which was every moment growing fainter in the distance:

"'Twas Murphy Delany, so funny and frisky,
Stept into a shebeen shop to get his skin full;
He reeled out again pretty well lined with whiskey,
As fresh as a shamrock, as blind as a bull.

"The singer, whose condition I dare say resembled that of his hero, was soon too far off to regale my ears any more; and as his music died away, I myself sank into a doze, neither sound nor refreshing. Somehow the song had got into my head, and I went meandering on through the adventures of my respectable fellow-countryman, who, on emerging from the 'shebeen shop,' fell into a river, from which he was fished up to be 'sat upon' by a coroner's jury, who having learned from a 'horse-doctor' that he was 'dead as a door-nail, so there was an end,' returned their verdict accordingly, just as he returned to his senses, when an angry altercation and a pitched battle between the body and the coroner winds up the lay with due spirit and pleasantry.

"Through this ballad I continued with a weary monotony to plod, down to the very last line, and then *da capo*, and so on, in my uncomfortable half-sleep, for how long, I can't conjecture. I found myself at last, however, muttering, 'dead as a door-nail, so there was an end'; and something like another voice within me, seemed to say, very faintly, but sharply, 'dead! dead! dead! and may the Lord have mercy on your soul!' and instantaneously I was wide awake, and staring right before me from the pillow.

"Now — will you believe it, Dick? — I saw the same accursed figure standing full front, and gazing at me with its stony and fiendish countenance, not two yards from the bedside."

Tom stopped here, and wiped the perspiration from his face. I felt very queer. The girl was as pale as Tom; and, assembled as we were in the very scene of these adventures, we were all, I dare say, equally grateful for the clear daylight and the resuming bustle out of doors.

"For about three seconds only I saw it plainly; then it grew indistinct; but, for a long time, there was something like a column of dark vapour where it had been standing, between me and the wall; and I felt sure that he was still there. After a good while, this appearance went too. I took my clothes downstairs to the hall, and dressed there, with the door half open; then went out into the street, and walked about the town till morning, when I came back, in a miserable state of nervousness and exhaustion. I was such a fool, Dick, as to be ashamed to tell you how I came to be so upset. I thought you would laugh at me; especially as I had always talked philosophy, and treated *your* ghosts with contempt. I concluded you would give me no quarter; and so kept my tale of horror to myself.

"Now, Dick, you will hardly believe me, when I assure you, that for many nights after this last experience, I did not go to my room at all. I used to sit up for a while in the drawingroom after you had gone up to your bed; and then steal down softly to the hall-door, let myself out, and sit in the 'Robin Hood' tavern until the last guest went off; and then I got through the night like a sentry, pacing the streets till morning.

"For more than a week I never slept in bed. I sometimes had a snooze on a form in the 'Robin Hood,' and sometimes a nap in a chair during the day; but regular sleep I had absolutely none.

"I was quite resolved that we should get into another house; but I could not bring myself to tell you the reason, and I somehow put it off from day to day, although my life was, during every hour of this procrastination, rendered as miserable as that of a felon with the constables on his track. I was growing absolutely ill from this wretched mode of life.

"One afternoon I determined to enjoy an hour's sleep upon your bed. I hated mine; so that I had never, except in a stealthy visit every day to unmake it, lest Martha should discover the secret of my nightly absence, entered the ill-omened chamber.

"As ill-luck would have it, you had locked your bedroom, and taken away the key. I went into my own to unsettle the bedclothes, as usual, and give the bed the appearance of having been slept in. Now, a variety of circumstances concurred to bring about the dreadful scene through which I was that night to pass. In the first place, I was literally overpowered with fatigue, and longing for sleep; in the next place, the effect of this extreme exhaustion upon my nerves resembled that of a narcotic, and rendered me less susceptible than, perhaps, I should in any other condition have been, of the exciting fears which had become habitual to me. Then again, a little bit of the window was open, a pleasant freshness pervaded the room, and, to crown all, the cheerful sun of day was making the room quite pleasant. What was to prevent my enjoying an hour's nap *here*? The whole air was resonant with the cheerful hum of life, and the broad matter-of-fact light of day filled every corner of the room.

"I yielded — stifling my qualms — to the almost overpowering temptation; and merely throwing off my coat, and loosening my cravat, I lay down, limiting myself to *half-an-hour's* doze in the unwonted enjoyment of a feather bed, a coverlet, and a bolster.

"It was horribly insidious; and the demon, no doubt, marked my infatuated preparations. Dolt that I was, I fancied, with mind and body worn out for want of sleep, and an arrear of a full week's rest to my credit, that such measure as *half-an-hour's* sleep, in such a situation, was possible. My sleep was deathlike, long, and dreamless.

"Without a start or fearful sensation of any kind, I waked gently, but completely. It was, as you have good reason to remember, long past midnight — I believe, about two o'clock. When sleep has been deep and long enough to satisfy nature thoroughly, one often wakens in this way, suddenly, tranquilly, and completely.

"There was a figure seated in that lumbering, old sofa-chair, near the fireplace. Its back was rather towards me, but I could not be mistaken; it turned slowly round, and, merciful heavens! there was the stony face, with its infernal lineaments of malignity and despair, gloating on me. There was now no doubt as to its consciousness of my presence, and the hellish malice with which it was animated, for it arose, and drew close to the bedside. There was a rope about its neck, and the other end, coiled up, it held stiffly in its hand.

"My good angel nerved me for this horrible crisis. I remained for some seconds transfixed by the gaze of this tremendous phantom. He came close to the bed, and appeared on the point of mounting upon it. The next instant I was upon the floor at the far side, and in a moment more was, I don't know how, upon the lobby.

"But the spell was not yet broken; the valley of the shadow of death was not yet traversed. The abhorred phantom was before me there; it was standing near the banisters, stooping a little, and with one end of the rope round its own neck, was poising a noose at the other, as if to throw over mine; and while engaged in this baleful pantomime, it wore a smile so sensual, so unspeakably dreadful, that my senses were nearly overpowered. I saw and remember nothing more, until I found myself in your room.

"I had a wonderful escape, Dick — there is no disputing *that* — an escape for which, while I live, I shall bless the mercy of heaven. No one can conceive or imagine what it is for flesh and blood to stand in the presence of such a thing, but one who has had the terrific experience. Dick, Dick, a shadow has passed over me — a chill has crossed my blood and marrow, and I will never be the same again — never, Dick — never!"

Our handmaid, a mature girl of two-and-fifty, as I have said, stayed her hand, as Tom's story proceeded, and by little and little drew near to us, with open mouth, and her brows contracted over her little, beady black eyes, till stealing a glance over her shoulder now and then, she established herself close behind us. During the relation, she had made various earnest comments, in an undertone; but these and her ejaculations, for the sake of brevity and simplicity, I have omitted in my narration.

"It's often I heard tell of it," she now said, "but I never believed it rightly till now — though, indeed, why should not I? Does not my mother, down there in the lane, know quare stories, God bless us, beyant telling about it? But you ought not to have slept in the back bedroom. She was loath to let me be going in and out of that room even in the day time, let alone for any Christian to spend the night in it; for sure she says it was his own bedroom."

"*Whose* own bedroom?" we asked, in a breath.

"Why, *his* — the ould Judge's — Judge Horrock's, to be sure, God rest his soul!"; and she looked fearfully round.

"Amen!" I muttered. "But did he die there?"

"Die there! No, not quite *there*," she said. "Shure, was not it over the banisters he hung himself, the ould sinner, God be merciful to us all? and was not it in the alcove they found the handles of the skipping-rope cut off, and the knife where he was settling the cord, God bless us, to hang himself with? It was his housekeeper's daughter owned the rope, my mother often told me, and the child never throve after, and used to be starting up out of her sleep, and screeching in the night time, wid dhramas and frights that cum an her; and they said how it was the speerit of the ould Judge that was tormentin' her; and she used to be roaring and yelling out to hould back the big ould fellow with the crooked neck; and then she'd screech 'Oh, the master! the master! he's stampin' at me, and beckoning to me! Mother, darling, don't let me go!' And so the poor crathure died at last, and the dothers said it was wather on the brain, for it was all they could say."

"How long ago was all this?" I asked.

"Oh, then, how would I know?" she answered. "But it must be a wondherful long time ago, for the housekeeper was an ould woman, with a pipe in her mouth, and not a tooth left, and better nor eighty years ould when my mother was first married; and they said she was a rale buxom, fine-dressed woman when the ould Judge come to his end; an', indeed, my mother's not far from eighty years ould herself this day; and what made it worse for the unnatural ould villain, God rest his soul, to frighten the little girl out of the world the way he did, was what was mostly thought and believed by every one. My mother says how the poor little crathure was his own child; for he was by all accounts an ould villain every way, an' the hangin'est judge that ever was known in Ireland's ground."

"From what you said about the danger of sleeping in that bedroom," said I, "I suppose there were stories about the ghost having appeared there to others."

"Well, there was things said — quare things, surely," she answered, as it seemed, with some reluctance. "And why would not there? Sure was it not up in that same room he slept for more than twenty years? and was it not in the *alcove* he got the rope ready that done his own business at last, the way he done many a better man's in his lifetime? — and was not the body lying in

the same bed after death, and put in the coffin there, too, and carried out to his grave from it in Pether's churchyard, after the coroner was done? But there was quare stories — my mother has them all — about how one Nicholas Spaight got into trouble on the head of it."

"And what did they say of this Nicholas Spaight?" I asked.

"Oh, for that matther, it's soon told," she answered.

And she certainly did relate a very strange story, which so piqued my curiosity, that I took occasion to visit the ancient lady, her mother, from whom I learned many very curious particulars. Indeed, I am tempted to tell the tale, but my fingers are weary, and I must defer it. But if you wish to hear it another time, I shall do my best.

When we had heard the strange tale I have *not* told you, we put one or two further questions to her about the alleged spectral visitations, to which the house had, ever since the death of the wicked old Judge, been subjected.

"No one ever had luck in it," she told us. "There was always cross accidents, sudden deaths, and short times in it. The first that tuck, it was a family — I forget their name — but at any rate there was two young ladies and their papa. He was about sixty, and a stout healthy gentleman as you'd wish to see at that age. Well, he slept in that unlucky back bedroom; and, God between us an' harm! sure enough he was found dead one morning, half out of the bed, with his head as black as a sloe, and swelled like a puddin', hanging down near the floor. It was a fit, they said. He was as dead as a mackerel, and so *he* could not say what it was; but the ould people was all sure that it was nothing at all but the ould Judge, God bless us! that frightened him out of his senses and his life together.

"Some time after there was a rich old maiden lady took the house. I don't know which room *she* slept in, but she lived alone; and at any rate, one morning, the servants going down early to their work, found her sitting on the passage-stairs, shivering and talkin' to herself, quite mad; and never a word more could any of *them* or her friends get from her ever afterwards but, 'Don't ask me to go, for I promised to wait for him.' They never made out from her who it was she meant by *him*, but of course those that knew all about the ould house were at no loss for the meaning of all that happened to her.

"Then afterwards, when the house was let out in lodgings, there was Micky Byrne that took the same room, with his wife and three little children; and sure I heard Mrs. Byrne myself telling how the children used to be lifted up in the bed at night, she could not see by what mains; and how they were starting and screeching every hour, just all as one as the housekeeper's little girl that died, till at last one night poor Micky had a dhrop in him, the way he used now and again; and what do you think in the middle of the night he thought he heard a noise on the stairs, and being in liquor, nothing less id do him but out he must go himself to see what was wrong. Well, after that, all she ever heard of him was himself sayin', 'Oh, God!' and a tumble that shook the very house; and there, sure enough, he was lying on the lower stairs, under the lobby, with his neck smashed double undher him, where he was flung over the banisters."

Then the handmaiden added ——

"I'll go down to the lane, and send up Joe Gavvey to pack up the rest of the taythings, and bring all the things across to your new lodgings."

And so we all sallied out together, each of us breathing more freely, I have no doubt, as we crossed that ill-omened threshold for the last time.

Now, I may add thus much, in compliance with the immemorial usage of the realm of fiction, which sees the hero not only through his adventures, but fairly out of the world. You must have perceived that what the flesh, blood, and bone hero of romance proper is to the regular compounder of fiction, this old house of brick, wood, and mortar is to the humble recorder of this true tale. I, therefore, relate, as in duty bound, the catastrophe which ultimately befell it, which was simply this — that about two years subsequently to my story it was taken by a quack doctor, who called himself Baron Duhlstoerf, and filled the parlour windows with bottles of indescribable horrors preserved in brandy, and the newspapers with the usual grandiloquent and mendacious advertisements. This gentleman among his virtues did not reckon sobriety, and one night, being overcome with much wine, he set fire to his bed curtains, partially burned himself, and totally consumed the house. It was afterwards rebuilt, and for a time an undertaker established himself in the premises.

I have now told you my own and Tom's adventures, together with some valuable collateral particulars; and having acquitted myself of my engagement, I wish you a very good night, and pleasant dreams.

AN AUTHENTIC NARRATIVE OF A HAUNTED HOUSE

[The Editor of the UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE submits the following very remarkable statement, with every detail of which he has been for some years acquainted, upon the ground that it affords the most authentic and ample relation of a series of marvellous phenomena, in nowise connected with what is technically termed "spiritualism," which he has anywhere met with. All the persons — and there are many of them living — upon whose separate evidence some parts, and upon whose united testimony others, of this most singular recital depend, are, in their several walks of life, respectable, and such as would in any matter of judicial investigation be deemed wholly unexceptionable witnesses. There is not an incident here recorded which would not have been distinctly deposed to on oath had any necessity existed, by the persons who severally, and some of them in great fear, related their own distinct experiences. The Editor begs most pointedly to meet in limine the suspicion, that he is elaborating a trick, or vouching for another ghost of Mrs. Veal. As a mere story the narrative is valueless: its sole claim to attention is its absolute truth. For the good faith of its relator he pledges his own and the character of this Magazine. With the Editor's concurrence, the name of the watering-place, and some special circumstances in no essential way bearing upon the peculiar character of the story, but which might have indicated the locality, and possibly annoyed persons interested in house property there, have been suppressed by the narrator. Not the slightest liberty has been taken with the narrative, which is presented precisely in the terms in which the writer of it, who employs throughout the first person, would, if need were, fix it in the form of an affidavit.]

Within the last eight years — the precise date I purposely omit — I was ordered by my physician, my health being in an unsatisfactory state, to change my residence to one upon the sea-coast; and accordingly, I took a house for a year in a fashionable watering-place, at a moderate distance from the city in which I had previously resided, and connected with it by a railway.

Winter was setting in when my removal thither was decided upon; but there was nothing whatever dismal or depressing in the change. The house I had taken was to all appearance, and in point of convenience, too, quite a modern one. It formed one in a cheerful row, with small gardens in front, facing the sea, and commanding sea air and sea views in perfection. In the rear it had coachhouse and stable, and between them and the house a considerable grass-plot, with some flowerbeds, interposed.

Our family consisted of my wife and myself, with three children, the eldest about nine years old, she and the next in age being girls; and the youngest, between six and seven, a boy. To these were added six servants, whom, although for certain reasons I decline giving their real names, I shall indicate, for the sake of clearness, by arbitrary ones. There was a nurse, Mrs. Southerland; a nursery-maid, Ellen Page; the cook, Mrs. Greenwood; and the housemaid, Ellen Faith; a butler, whom I shall call Smith, and his son, James, about two-and-twenty.

We came out to take possession at about seven o'clock in the evening; every thing was comfortable and cheery; good fires lighted, the rooms neat and airy, and a general air of preparation and comfort, highly conducive to good spirits and pleasant anticipations.

The sitting-rooms were large and cheerful, and they and the bedrooms more than ordinarily lofty, the kitchen and servants' rooms, on the same level, were well and comfortably furnished, and had, like the rest of the house, an air of recent painting and fitting up, and a completely modern character, which imparted a very cheerful air of cleanliness and convenience.

There had been just enough of the fuss of settling agreeably to occupy us, and to give a pleasant turn to our thoughts after we had retired to our rooms. Being an invalid, I had a small bed to myself — resigning the four-poster to my wife. The candle was extinguished, but a night-light was burning. I was coming up stairs, and she, already in bed, had just dismissed her maid, when we were both startled by a wild scream from her room; I found her in a state of the extremest agitation and terror. She insisted that she had seen an unnaturally tall figure come beside her bed and stand there. The light was too faint to enable her to define any thing respecting this apparition, beyond the fact of her having most distinctly seen such a shape, colourless from the insufficiency of the light to disclose more than its dark outline.

We both endeavoured to reassure her. The room once more looked so cheerful in the candlelight, that we were quite uninfluenced by the contagion of her terrors. The movements and voices of the servants down stairs still getting things into their places and completing our comfortable arrangements, had also their effect in steeling us against any such influence, and we set the whole thing down as a dream, or an imperfectly-seen outline of the bed-curtains. When, however, we were alone, my wife reiterated, still in great agitation, her clear assertion that she had most positively seen, being at the time as completely awake as ever she was, precisely what she had described to us. And in this conviction she continued perfectly firm.

A day or two after this, it came out that our servants were under an apprehension that, somehow or other, thieves had established a secret mode of access to the lower part of the house. The butler, Smith, had seen an ill-looking woman in his room on the first night of our arrival; and he and other servants constantly saw, for many days subsequently, glimpses of a retreating figure, which corresponded with that so seen by him, passing through a passage which led to a back area in which were some coal-vaults.

This figure was seen always in the act of retreating, its back turned, generally getting round the corner of the passage into the area, in a stealthy and hurried way, and, when closely followed, imperfectly seen again entering one of the coal-vaults, and when pursued into it, nowhere to be found.

The idea of any thing supernatural in the matter had, strange to say, not yet entered the mind of any one of the servants. They had heard some stories of smugglers having secret passages into houses, and using their means of access for purposes of pillage, or with a view to frighten superstitious people out of houses which they needed for their own objects, and a suspicion of similar practices here, caused them extreme uneasiness. The apparent anxiety also manifested by this retreating figure to escape observation, and her always appearing to make her egress at the same point, favoured this romantic hypothesis. The men, however, made a most careful examination of the back area, and of the coal-vaults, with a view to discover some mode of egress, but entirely without success. On the contrary, the result was, so far as it went, subversive of the theory; solid masonry met them on every hand.

I called the man, Smith, up, to hear from his own lips the particulars of what he had seen; and certainly his report was very curious. I give it as literally as my memory enables me: —

His son slept in the same room, and was sound asleep; but he lay awake, as men sometimes will on a change of bed, and having many things on his mind. He was lying with his face towards the wall, but observing a light and some little stir in the room, he turned round in his bed, and saw the figure of a woman, squalid, and ragged in dress; her figure rather low and broad; as well as I recollect, she had something — either a cloak or shawl — on, and wore a bonnet. Her back was turned, and she appeared to be searching or rummaging for something on the floor, and, without appearing to observe him, she turned in doing

so towards him. The light, which was more like the intense glow of a coal, as he described it, being of a deep red colour, proceeded from the hollow of her hand, which she held beside her head, and he saw her perfectly distinctly. She appeared middle-aged, was deeply pitted with the smallpox, and blind of one eye. His phrase in describing her general appearance was, that she was "a miserable, poor-looking creature."

He was under the impression that she must be the woman who had been left by the proprietor in charge of the house, and who had that evening, after having given up the keys, remained for some little time with the female servants. He coughed, therefore, to apprise her of his presence, and turned again towards the wall. When he again looked round she and the light were gone; and odd as was her method of lighting herself in her search, the circumstances excited neither uneasiness nor curiosity in his mind, until he discovered next morning that the woman in question had left the house long before he had gone to his bed.

I examined the man very closely as to the appearance of the person who had visited him, and the result was what I have described. It struck me as an odd thing, that even then, considering how prone to superstition persons in his rank of life usually are, he did not seem to suspect any thing supernatural in the occurrence; and, on the contrary, was thoroughly persuaded that his visitant was a living person, who had got into the house by some hidden entrance.

On Sunday, on his return from his place of worship, he told me that, when the service was ended, and the congregation making their way slowly out, he saw the very woman in the crowd, and kept his eye upon her for several minutes, but such was the crush, that all his efforts to reach her were unavailing, and when he got into the open street she was gone. He was quite positive as to his having distinctly seen her, however, for several minutes, and scouted the possibility of any mistake as to identity; and fully impressed with the substantial and living reality of his visitant, he was very much provoked at her having escaped him. He made inquiries also in the neighbourhood, but could procure no information, nor hear of any other persons having seen any woman corresponding with his visitant.

The cook and the housemaid occupied a bedroom on the kitchen floor. It had whitewashed walls, and they were actually terrified by the appearance of the shadow of a woman passing and repassing across the side wall opposite to their beds. They suspected that this had been going on much longer than they were aware, for its presence was discovered by a sort of accident, its movements happening to take a direction in distinct contrariety to theirs.

This shadow always moved upon one particular wall, returning after short intervals, and causing them extreme terror. They placed the candle, as the most obvious specific, so close to the infested wall, that the flame all but touched it; and believed for some time that they had effectually got rid of this annoyance; but one night, notwithstanding this arrangement of the light, the shadow returned, passing and repassing, as heretofore, upon the same wall, although their only candle was burning within an inch of it, and it was obvious that no substance capable of casting such a shadow could have interposed; and, indeed, as they described it, the shadow seemed to have no sort of relation to the position of the light, and appeared, as I have said, in manifest defiance of the laws of optics.

I ought to mention that the housemaid was a particularly fearless sort of person, as well as a very honest one; and her companion, the cook, a scrupulously religious woman, and both agreed in every particular in their relation of what occurred.

Meanwhile, the nursery was not without its annoyances, though as yet of a comparatively trivial kind. Sometimes, at night, the handle of the door was turned hurriedly as if by a person trying to come in, and at others a knocking was made at it. These sounds occurred after the children had settled to sleep, and while the nurse still remained awake. Whenever she called to know "who is there," the sounds ceased; but several times, and particularly at first, she was under the impression that they were caused by her mistress, who had come to see the children, and thus impressed she had got up and opened the door, expecting to see her, but discovering only darkness, and receiving no answer to her inquiries.

With respect to this nurse, I must mention that I believe no more perfectly trustworthy servant was ever employed in her capacity; and, in addition to her integrity, she was remarkably gifted with sound common sense.

One morning, I think about three or four weeks after our arrival, I was sitting at the parlour window which looked to the front, when I saw the little iron door which admitted into the small garden that lay between the window where I was sitting and the public road, pushed open by a woman who so exactly answered the description given by Smith of the woman who had visited his room on the night of his arrival as instantaneously to impress me with the conviction that she must be the identical person. She was a square, short woman, dressed in soiled and tattered clothes, scarred and pitted with smallpox, and blind of an eye. She stepped hurriedly into the little enclosure, and peered from a distance of a few yards into the room where I was sitting. I felt that now was the moment to clear the matter up; but there was something stealthy in the manner and look of the woman which convinced me that I must not appear to notice her until her retreat was fairly cut off. Unfortunately, I was suffering from a lame foot, and could not reach the bell as quickly as I wished. I made all the haste I could, and rang violently to bring up the servant Smith. In the short interval that intervened, I observed the woman from the window, who having in a leisurely way, and with a kind of scrutiny, looked along the front windows of the house, passed quickly out again, closing the gate after her, and followed a lady who was walking along the footpath at a quick pace, as if with the intention of begging from her. The moment the man entered I told him—"the blind woman you described to me has this instant followed a lady in that direction, try to overtake her." He was, if possible, more eager than I in the chase, but returned in a short time after a vain pursuit, very hot, and utterly disappointed. And, thereafter, we saw her face no more.

All this time, and up to the period of our leaving the house, which was not for two or three months later, there occurred at intervals the only phenomenon in the entire series having any resemblance to what we hear described of "Spiritualism." This was a knocking, like a soft hammering with a wooden mallet, as it seemed in the timbers between the bedroom ceilings and the roof. It had this special peculiarity, that it was always rythmical, and, I think, invariably, the emphasis upon the last stroke. It would sound rapidly "one, two, three, *four* — one, two, three, *four*;" or "one, two, *three* — one, two, *three*," and sometimes "one, *two* — one, *two*," &c., and this, with intervals and resumptions, monotonously for hours at a time.

At first this caused my wife, who was a good deal confined to her bed, much annoyance; and we sent to our neighbours to inquire if any hammering or carpentering was going on in their houses but were informed that nothing of the sort was taking place. I have myself heard it frequently, always in the same inaccessible part of the house, and with the same monotonous

emphasis. One odd thing about it was, that on my wife's calling out, as she used to do when it became more than usually troublesome, "stop that noise," it was invariably arrested for a longer or shorter time.

Of course none of these occurrences were ever mentioned in hearing of the children. They would have been, no doubt, like most children, greatly terrified had they heard any thing of the matter, and known that their elders were unable to account for what was passing; and their fears would have made them wretched and troublesome.

They used to play for some hours every day in the back garden — the house forming one end of this oblong inclosure, the stable and coachhouse the other, and two parallel walls of considerable height the sides. Here, as it afforded a perfectly safe playground, they were frequently left quite to themselves; and in talking over their days' adventures, as children will, they happened to mention a woman, or rather the woman, for they had long grown familiar with her appearance, whom they used to see in the garden while they were at play. They assumed that she came in and went out at the stable door, but they never actually saw her enter or depart. They merely saw a figure — that of a very poor woman, soiled and ragged — near the stable wall, stooping over the ground, and apparently grubbing in the loose clay in search of something. She did not disturb, or appear to observe them; and they left her in undisturbed possession of her nook of ground. When seen it was always in the same spot, and similarly occupied; and the description they gave of her general appearance — for they never saw her face — corresponded with that of the one-eyed woman whom Smith, and subsequently as it seemed, I had seen.

The other man, James, who looked after a mare which I had purchased for the purpose of riding exercise, had, like every one else in the house, his little trouble to report, though it was not much. The stall in which, as the most comfortable, it was decided to place her, she peremptorily declined to enter. Though a very docile and gentle little animal, there was no getting her into it. She would snort and rear, and, in fact, do or suffer any thing rather than set her hoof in it. He was fain, therefore, to place her in another. And on several occasions he found her there, exhibiting all the equine symptoms of extreme fear. Like the rest of us, however, this man was not troubled in the particular case with any superstitious qualms. The mare had evidently been frightened; and he was puzzled to find out how, or by whom, for the stable was well-secured, and had, I am nearly certain, a lock-up yard outside.

One morning I was greeted with the intelligence that robbers had certainly got into the house in the night; and that one of them had actually been seen in the nursery. The witness, I found, was my eldest child, then, as I have said, about nine years of age. Having awoke in the night, and lain awake for some time in her bed, she heard the handle of the door turn, and a person whom she distinctly saw — for it was a light night, and the window-shutters unclosed — but whom she had never seen before, stepped in on tiptoe, and with an appearance of great caution. He was a rather small man, with a very red face; he wore an oddly cut frock coat, the collar of which stood up, and trousers, rough and wide, like those of a sailor, turned up at the ankles, and either short boots or clumsy shoes, covered with mud. This man listened beside the nurse's bed, which stood next the door, as if to satisfy himself that she was sleeping soundly; and having done so for some seconds, he began to move cautiously in a diagonal line, across the room to the chimney-piece, where he stood for a while, and so resumed his tiptoe walk, skirting the wall, until he reached a chest of drawers, some of which were open, and into which he looked, and began to rummage in a hurried way, as the child supposed, making search for something worth taking away. He then passed on to the window, where was a dressing-table, at which he also stopped, turning over the things upon it, and standing for some time at the window as if looking out, and then resuming his walk by the side wall opposite to that by which he had moved up to the window, he returned in the same way toward the nurse's bed, so as to reach it at the foot. With its side to the end wall, in which was the door, was placed the little bed in which lay my eldest child, who watched his proceedings with the extremest terror. As he drew near she instinctively moved herself in the bed, with her head and shoulders to the wall, drawing up her feet; but he passed by without appearing to observe, or, at least, to care for her presence. Immediately after the nurse turned in her bed as if about to waken; and when the child, who had drawn the clothes about her head, again ventured to peep out, the man was gone.

The child had no idea of her having seen any thing more formidable than a thief. With the prowling, cautious, and noiseless manner of proceeding common to such marauders, the air and movements of the man whom she had seen entirely corresponded. And on hearing her perfectly distinct and consistent account, I could myself arrive at no other conclusion than that a stranger had actually got into the house. I had, therefore, in the first instance, a most careful examination made to discover any traces of an entrance having been made by any window into the house. The doors had been found barred and locked as usual; but no sign of any thing of the sort was discernible. I then had the various articles — plate, wearing apparel, books, &c., counted; and after having conned over and reckoned up every thing, it became quite clear that nothing whatever had been removed from the house, nor was there the slightest indication of any thing having been so much as disturbed there. I must here state that this child was remarkably clear, intelligent, and observant; and that her description of the man, and of all that had occurred, was most exact, and as detailed as the want of perfect light rendered possible.

I felt assured that an entrance had actually been effected into the house, though for what purpose was not easily to be conjectured. The man, Smith, was equally confident upon this point; and his theory was that the object was simply to frighten us out of the house by making us believe it haunted; and he was more than ever anxious and on the alert to discover the conspirators. It often since appeared to me odd. Every year, indeed, more odd, as this cumulative case of the marvellous becomes to my mind more and more inexplicable — that underlying my sense of mystery and puzzle, was all along the quiet assumption that all these occurrences were one way or another referable to natural causes. I could not account for them, indeed, myself; but during the whole period I inhabited that house, I never once felt, though much alone, and often up very late at night, any of those tremors and thrills which every one has at times experienced when situation and the hour are favourable. Except the cook and housemaid, who were plagued with the shadow I mentioned crossing and recrossing upon the bedroom wall, we all, without exception, experienced the same strange sense of security, and regarded these phenomena rather with a perplexed sort of interest and curiosity, than with any more unpleasant sensations.

The knockings which I have mentioned at the nursery door, preceded generally by the sound of a step on the lobby, meanwhile continued. At that time (for my wife, like myself, was an invalid) two eminent physicians, who came out occasionally by rail, were attending us. These gentlemen were at first only amused, but ultimately interested, and very much puzzled by the occurrences which we described. One of them, at last, recommended that a candle should be kept burning upon the lobby. It was

in fact a recurrence to an old woman's recipe against ghosts — of course it might be serviceable, too, against impostors; at all events, seeming, as I have said, very much interested and puzzled, he advised it, and it was tried. We fancied that it was successful; for there was an interval of quiet for, I think, three or four nights. But after that, the noises — the footsteps on the lobby — the knocking at the door, and the turning of the handle recommenced in full force, notwithstanding the light upon the table outside; and these particular phenomena became only more perplexing than ever.

The alarm of robbers and smugglers gradually subsided after a week or two; but we were again to hear news from the nursery. Our second little girl, then between seven and eight years of age, saw in the night time — she alone being awake — a young woman, with black, or very dark hair, which hung loose, and with a black cloak on, standing near the middle of the floor, opposite the hearthstone, and fronting the foot of her bed. She appeared quite unobservant of the children and nurse sleeping in the room. She was very pale, and looked, the child said, both "sorry and frightened," and with something very peculiar and terrible about her eyes, which made the child conclude that she was dead. She was looking, not at, but in the direction of the child's bed, and there was a dark streak across her throat, like a scar with blood upon it. This figure was not motionless; but once or twice turned slowly, and without appearing to be conscious of the presence of the child, or the other occupants of the room, like a person in vacancy or abstraction. There was on this occasion a night-light burning in the chamber; and the child saw, or thought she saw, all these particulars with the most perfect distinctness. She got her head under the bedclothes; and although a good many years have passed since then, she cannot recall the spectacle without feelings of peculiar horror.

One day, when the children were playing in the back garden, I asked them to point out to me the spot where they were accustomed to see the woman who occasionally showed herself as I have described, near the stable wall. There was no division of opinion as to this precise point, which they indicated in the most distinct and confident way. I suggested that, perhaps, something might be hidden there in the ground; and advised them digging a hole there with their little spades, to try for it. Accordingly, to work they went, and by my return in the evening they had grubbed up a piece of a jawbone, with several teeth in it. The bone was very much decayed, and ready to crumble to pieces, but the teeth were quite sound. I could not tell whether they were human grinders; but I showed the fossil to one of the physicians I have mentioned, who came out the next evening, and he pronounced them human teeth. The same conclusion was come to a day or two later by the other medical man. It appears to me now, on reviewing the whole matter, almost unaccountable that, with such evidence before me, I should not have got in a labourer, and had the spot effectually dug and searched. I can only say, that so it was. I was quite satisfied of the moral truth of every word that had been related to me, and which I have here set down with scrupulous accuracy. But I experienced an apathy, for which neither then nor afterwards did I quite know how to account. I had a vague, but immovable impression that the whole affair was referable to natural agencies. It was not until some time after we had left the house, which, by-the-by, we afterwards found had had the reputation of being haunted before we had come to live in it, that on reconsideration I discovered the serious difficulty of accounting satisfactorily for all that had occurred upon ordinary principles. A great deal we might arbitrarily set down to imagination. But even in so doing there was, *in limine*, the oddity, not to say improbability, of so many different persons having nearly simultaneously suffered from different spectral and other illusions during the short period for which we had occupied that house, who never before, nor so far as we learned, afterwards were troubled by any fears or fancies of the sort. There were other things, too, not to be so accounted for. The odd knockings in the roof I frequently heard myself.

There were also, which I before forgot to mention, in the daytime, rappings at the doors of the sitting-rooms, which constantly deceived us; and it was not till our "come in" was unanswered, and the hall or passage outside the door was discovered to be empty, that we learned that whatever else caused them, human hands did not. All the persons who reported having seen the different persons or appearances here described by me, were just as confident of having literally and distinctly seen them, as I was of having seen the hard-featured woman with the blind eye, so remarkably corresponding with Smith's description.

About a week after the discovery of the teeth, which were found, I think, about two feet under the ground, a friend, much advanced in years, and who remembered the town in which we had now taken up our abode, for a very long time, happened to pay us a visit. He goodhumouredly pooh-poohed the whole thing; but at the same time was evidently curious about it. "We might construct a sort of story," said I (I am giving, of course, the substance and purport, not the exact words, of our dialogue), "and assign to each of the three figures who appeared their respective parts in some dreadful tragedy enacted in this house. The male figure represents the murderer; the ill-looking, one-eyed woman his accomplice, who, we will suppose, buried the body where she is now so often seen grubbing in the earth, and where the human teeth and jawbone have so lately been disinterred; and the young woman with dishevelled tresses, and black cloak, and the bloody scar across her throat, their victim. A difficulty, however, which I cannot get over, exists in the cheerfulness, the great publicity, and the evident very recent date of the house." "Why, as to that," said he, "the house is *not* modern; it and those beside it formed an old government store, altered and fitted up recently as you see. I remember it well in my young days, fifty years ago, before the town had grown out in this direction, and a more entirely lonely spot, or one more fitted for the commission of a secret crime, could not have been imagined."

I have nothing to add, for very soon after this my physician pronounced a longer stay unnecessary for my health, and we took our departure for another place of abode. I may add, that although I have resided for considerable periods in many other houses, I never experienced any annoyances of a similar kind elsewhere; neither have I made (stupid dog! you will say), any inquiries respecting either the antecedents or subsequent history of the house in which we made so disturbed a sojourn. I was content with what I knew, and have here related as clearly as I could, and I think it a very pretty puzzle as it stands.

[Thus ends the statement, which we abandon to the ingenuity of our readers, having ourselves no satisfactory explanation to suggest; and simply repeating the assurance with which we prefaced it, namely, that we can vouch for the perfect good faith and the accuracy of the narrator. — E.D.U.M.]

ULTOR DE LACY: A LEGEND OF CAPPERCULLEN

CHAPTER I

The Jacobite's Legacy

In my youth I heard a great many Irish family traditions, more or less of a supernatural character, some of them very peculiar, and all, to a child at least, highly interesting. One of these I will now relate, though the translation to cold type from oral narrative, with all the aids of animated human voice and countenance, and the appropriate *mise-en-scène* of the old-fashioned parlour fireside and its listening circle of excited faces, and, outside, the wintry blast and the moan of leafless boughs, with the occasional rattle of the clumsy old window-frame behind shutter and curtain, as the blast swept by, is at best a trying one.

About midway up the romantic glen of CapperculLEN, near the point where the counties of Limerick, Clare, and Tipperary converge, upon the then sequestered and forest-bound range of the Slieve-Felim hills, there stood, in the reigns of the two earliest Georges, the picturesque and massive remains of one of the finest of the Anglo-Irish castles of Munster — perhaps of Ireland.

It crowned the precipitous edge of the wooded glen, itself half-buried among the wild forest that covered that long and solitary range. There was no human habitation within a circle of many miles, except the half-dozen hovels and the small thatched chapel composing the little village of Murroa, which lay at the foot of the glen among the straggling skirts of the noble forest.

Its remoteness and difficulty of access saved it from demolition. It was worth nobody's while to pull down and remove the ponderous and clumsy oak, much less the masonry or flagged roofing of the pile. Whatever would pay the cost of removal had been long since carried away. The rest was abandoned to time — the destroyer.

The hereditary owners of this noble building and of a wide territory in the contiguous counties I have named, were English — the De Lacys — long naturalized in Ireland. They had acquired at least this portion of their estate in the reign of Henry VIII, and held it, with some vicissitudes, down to the establishment of the revolution in Ireland, when they suffered attainder, and, like other great families of that period, underwent a final eclipse.

The De Lacy of that day retired to France, and held a brief command in the Irish Brigade, interrupted by sickness. He retired, became a poor hanger-on of the Court of St. Germain's, and died early in the eighteenth century — as well as I remember, 1705 — leaving an only son, hardly twelve years old, called by the strange but significant name of Ultor.

At this point commences the marvellous ingredient of my tale.

When his father was dying, he had him to his bedside, with no one by except his confessor; and having told him, first, that on reaching the age of twenty-one, he was to lay claim to a certain small estate in the county of Clare, in Ireland, in right of his mother — the title-deeds of which he gave him — and next, having enjoined him not to marry before the age of thirty, on the ground that earlier marriages destroyed the spirit and the power of enterprise, and would incapacitate him from the accomplishment of his destiny — the restoration of his family — he then went on to open to the child a matter which so terrified him that he cried lamentably, trembling all over, clinging to the priest's gown with one hand and to his father's cold wrist with the other, and imploring him, with screams of horror, to desist from his communication.

But the priest, impressed, no doubt, himself, with its necessity, compelled him to listen. And then his father showed him a small picture, from which also the child turned with shrieks, until similarly constrained to look. They did not let him go until he had carefully conned the features, and was able to tell them, from memory, the colour of the eyes and hair, and the fashion and hues of the dress. Then his father gave him a black box containing this portrait, which was a full-length miniature, about nine inches long, painted very finely in oils, as smooth as enamel, and folded above it a sheet of paper, written over in a careful and very legible hand.

The deeds and this black box constituted the most important legacy bequeathed to his only child by the ruined Jacobite, and he deposited them in the hands of the priest, in trust, till his boy, Ultor, should have attained to an age to understand their value, and to keep them securely.

When this scene was ended, the dying exile's mind, I suppose, was relieved, for he spoke cheerily, and said he believed he would recover; and they soothed the crying child, and his father kissed him, and gave him a little silver coin to buy fruit with; and so they sent him off with another boy for a walk, and when he came back his father was dead.

He remained in France under the care of this ecclesiastic until he had attained the age of twenty-one, when he repaired to Ireland, and his title being unaffected by his father's attainder, he easily made good his claim to the small estate in the county of Clare.

There he settled, making a dismal and solitary tour now and then of the vast territories which had once been his father's, and nursing those gloomy and impatient thoughts which befitted the enterprises to which he was devoted.

Occasionally he visited Paris, that common centre of English, Irish, and Scottish disaffection; and there, when a little past thirty, he married the daughter of another ruined Irish house. His bride returned with him to the melancholy seclusion of their Munster residence, where she bore him in succession two daughters — Alice, the elder, dark-eyed and dark-haired, grave and sensible — Una, four years younger, with large blue eyes and long and beautiful golden hair.

Their poor mother was, I believe, naturally a lighthearted, sociable, high-spirited little creature; and her gay and childish nature pined in the isolation and gloom of her lot. At all events she died young, and the children were left to the sole care of their melancholy and embittered father. In process of time the girls grew up, tradition says, beautiful. The elder was designed for a convent, the younger her father hoped to mate as nobly as her high blood and splendid beauty seemed to promise, if only the great game on which he had resolved to stake all succeeded.

CHAPTER II

The Fairies in the Castle

The Rebellion of '45 came, and Ultor de Lacy was one of the few Irishmen implicated treasonably in that daring and romantic insurrection. Of course there were warrants out against him, but he was not to be found. The young ladies, indeed, remained as heretofore in their father's lonely house in Clare; but whether he had crossed the water or was still in Ireland was for some time unknown, even to them. In due course he was attainted, and his little estate forfeited. It was a miserable catastrophe — a tremendous and beggarly waking up from a life-long dream of returning principality.

In due course the officers of the crown came down to take possession, and it behoved the young ladies to flit. Happily for them the ecclesiastic I have mentioned was not quite so confident as their father, of his winning back the magnificent patrimony of his ancestors; and by his advice the daughters had been secured twenty pounds a year each, under the marriage settlement of their parents, which was all that stood between this proud house and literal destitution.

Late one evening, as some little boys from the village were returning from a ramble through the dark and devious glen of Capperpullen, with their pockets laden with nuts and "frahans," to their amazement and even terror they saw a light streaming redly from the narrow window of one of the towers overhanging the precipice among the ivy and the lofty branches, across the glen, already dim in the shadows of the deepening night.

"Look — look — look — 'tis the Phooka's tower!" was the general cry, in the vernacular Irish, and a universal scamper commenced.

The bed of the glen, strewn with great fragments of rock, among which rose the tall stems of ancient trees, and overgrown with a tangled copse, was at the best no favourable ground for a run. Now it was dark; and, terrible work breaking through brambles and hazels and tumbling over rocks. Little Shaeen Mull Ryan, the last of the panic rout, screaming to his mates to wait for him — saw a whitish figure emerge from the thicket at the base of the stone flight of steps that descended the side of the glen, close by the castle-wall, intercepting his flight, and a discordant male voice shrieked —

"I have you!"

At the same time the boy, with a cry of terror, tripped and tumbled; and felt himself roughly caught by the arm, and hauled to his feet with a shake.

A wild yell from the child, and a volley of terror and entreaty followed.

"Who is it, Larry; what's the matter?" cried a voice, high in air, from the turret window, The words floated down through the trees, clear and sweet as the low notes of a flute.

"Only a child, my lady; a boy."

"Is he hurt?"

"Are you hurt?" demanded the whitish man, who held him fast, and repeated the question in Irish; but the child only kept blubbering and crying for mercy, with his hands clasped, and trying to drop on his knees.

Larry's strong old hand held him up. He *was* hurt, and bleeding from over his eye.

"Just a trifle hurted, my lady!"

"Bring him up here."

Shaeen Mull Ryan gave himself over. He was among "the good people," who he knew would keep him prisoner for ever and a day. There was no good in resisting. He grew bewildered, and yielded himself passively to his fate, and emerged from the glen on the platform above; his captor's knotted old hand still on his arm, and looked round on the tall mysterious trees, and the gray front of the castle, revealed in the imperfect moonlight, as upon the scenery of a dream.

The old man who, with thin wiry legs, walked by his side, in a dingy white coat, and blue facings, and great pewter buttons, with his silver gray hair escaping from under his battered three-cocked hat; and his shrewd puckered resolute face, in which the boy could read no promise of sympathy, showing so white and phantom-like in the moonlight, was, as he thought, the incarnate ideal of a fairy.

This figure led him in silence under the great arched gateway, and across the grass-grown court, to the door in the far angle of the building; and so, in the dark, round and round, up a stone screw stair, and with a short turn into a large room, with a fire of turf and wood, burning on its long unused hearth, over which hung a pot, and about it an old woman with a great wooden spoon was busy. An iron candlestick supported their solitary candle; and about the floor of the room, as well as on the table and chairs, lay a litter of all sorts of things; piles of old faded hangings, boxes, trunks, clothes, pewter-plates, and cups; and I know not what more.

But what instantly engaged the fearful gaze of the boy were the figures of two ladies; red drugget cloaks they had on, like the peasant girls of Munster and Connaught, and the rest of their dress was pretty much in keeping. But they had the grand air, the refined expression and beauty, and above all, the serene air of command that belong to people of a higher rank.

The elder, with black hair and full brown eyes, sat writing at the deal table on which the candle stood, and raised her dark gaze to the boy as he came in. The other, with her hood thrown back, beautiful and *riant*, with a flood of wavy golden hair, and great blue eyes, and with something kind, and arch, and strange in her countenance, struck him as the most wonderful beauty he could have imagined.

They questioned the man in a language strange to the child. It was not English, for he had a smattering of that, and the man's story seemed to amuse them. The two young ladies exchanged a glance, and smiled mysteriously. He was more convinced than ever that he was among the good people. The younger stepped gaily forward and said —

"Do you know who I am, my little man? Well, I'm the fairy Una, and this is my palace; and that fairy you see there (pointing to the dark lady, who was looking out something in a box), is my sister and family physician, the Lady Graveairs; and these

(glancing at the old man and woman), are some of my courtiers; and I'm considering now what I shall do with *you*, whether I shall send you tonight to Lough Guir, riding on a rush, to make my compliments to the Earl of Desmond in his enchanted castle; or, straight to your bed, two thousand miles under ground, among the gnomes; or to prison in that little corner of the moon you see through the window — with the man-in-the-moon for your gaoler, for thrice three hundred years and a day! There, don't cry. You only see how serious a thing it is for you, little boys, to come so near my castle. Now, for this once, I'll let you go. But, henceforward, any boys I, or my people, may find within half a mile round my castle, shall belong to me for life, and never behold their home or their people more."

And she sang a little air and chased mystically half a dozen steps before him, holding out her cloak with her pretty fingers, and courtesying very low, to his indescribable alarm.

Then, with a little laugh, she said ——

"My little man, we must mend your head."

And so they washed his scratch, and the elder one applied a plaister to it. And she of the great blue eyes took out of her pocket a little French box of bonbons and emptied it into his hand, and she said ——

"You need not be afraid to eat these — they are very good — and I'll send my fairy, Blanc-et-bleu, to set you free. Take him (she addressed Larry), and let him go, with a solemn charge."

The elder, with a grave and affectionate smile, said, looking on the fairy ——

"Brave, dear, wild Una! nothing can ever quell your gaiety of heart."

And Una kissed her merrily on the cheek.

So the oak door of the room again opened, and Shaeen, with his conductor, descended the stair. He walked with the scared boy in grim silence near half way down the wild hillside toward Murroa, and then he stopped, and said in Irish ——

"You never saw the fairies before, my fine fellow, and 'tisin't often those who once set eyes on us return to tell it. Whoever comes nearer, night or day, than this stone," and he tapped it with the end of his cane, "will never see his home again, for we'll keep him till the day of judgment; goodnight, little gossoon — and away with you."

So these young ladies, Alice and Una, with two old servants, by their father's direction, had taken up their abode in a portion of that side of the old castle which overhung the glen; and with the furniture and hangings they had removed from their late residence, and with the aid of glass in the casements and some other indispensable repairs, and a thorough airing, they made the rooms they had selected just habitable, as a rude and temporary shelter.

CHAPTER III

The Priest's Adventures in the Glen

At first, of course, they saw or heard little of their father. In general, however, they knew that his plan was to procure some employment in France, and to remove them there. Their present strange abode was only an adventure and an episode, and they believed that any day they might receive instructions to commence their journey.

After a little while the pursuit relaxed. The government, I believe, did not care, provided he did not obtrude himself, what became of him, or where he concealed himself. At all events, the local authorities showed no disposition to hunt him down. The young ladies' charges on the little forfeited property were paid without any dispute, and no vexatious inquiries were raised as to what had become of the furniture and other personal property which had been carried away from the forfeited house.

The haunted reputation of the castle — for in those days, in matters of the marvellous, the oldest were children — secured the little family in the seclusion they coveted. Once, or sometimes twice a week, old Laurence, with a shaggy little pony, made a secret expedition to the city of Limerick, starting before dawn, and returning under the cover of the night, with his purchases. There was beside an occasional sly moonlit visit from the old parish priest, and a midnight mass in the old castle for the little outlawed congregation.

As the alarm and inquiry subsided, their father made them, now and then, a brief and stealthy visit. At first these were but of a night's duration, and with great precaution; but gradually they were extended and less guarded. Still he was, as the phrase is in Munster, "on his keeping." He had firearms always by his bed, and had arranged places of concealment in the castle in the event of a surprise. But no attempt nor any disposition to molest him appearing, he grew more at ease, if not more cheerful.

It came, at last, that he would sometimes stay so long as two whole months at a time, and then depart as suddenly and mysteriously as he came. I suppose he had always some promising plot on hand, and his head full of ingenious treason, and lived on the sickly and exciting dietary of hope deferred.

Was there a poetical justice in this, that the little *ménage* thus secretly established, in the solitary and timeworn pile, should have themselves experienced, but from causes not so easily explicable, those very supernatural perturbations which they had themselves essayed to inspire?

The interruption of the old priest's secret visits was the earliest consequence of the mysterious interference which now began to display itself. One night, having left his cob in care of his old sacristan in the little village, he trudged on foot along the winding pathway, among the gray rocks and ferns that threaded the glen, intending a ghostly visit to the fair recluses of the castle, and he lost his way in this strange fashion.

There was moonlight, indeed, but it was little more than quarter-moon, and a long train of funereal clouds were sailing slowly across the sky — so that, faint and wan as it was, the light seldom shone full out, and was often hidden for a minute or two altogether. When he reached the point in the glen where the castle-stairs were wont to be, he could see nothing of them, and above, no trace of the castle-towers. So, puzzled somewhat, he pursued his way up the ravine, wondering how his walk had become so unusually protracted and fatiguing.

At last, sure enough, he saw the castle as plain as could be, and a lonely streak of candlelight issuing from the tower, just as usual, when his visit was expected. But he could not find the stair; and had to clamber among the rocks and copsewood the best way he could. But when he emerged at top, there was nothing but the bare heath. Then the clouds stole over the moon again, and he moved along with hesitation and difficulty, and once more he saw the outline of the castle against the sky, quite sharp and clear. But this time it proved to be a great battlemented mass of cloud on the horizon. In a few minutes more he was quite close, all of a sudden, to the great front, rising gray and dim in the feeble light, and not till he could have struck it with his good oak "wattle" did he discover it to be only one of those wild, gray frontages of living rock that rise here and there in picturesque tiers along the slopes of those solitary mountains. And so, till dawn, pursuing this mirage of the castle, through pools and among ravines, he wore out a night of miserable misadventure and fatigue.

Another night, riding up the glen, so far as the level way at bottom would allow, and intending to make his nag fast at his customary tree, he heard on a sudden a horrid shriek at top of the steep rocks above his head, and something — a gigantic human form, it seemed — came tumbling and bounding headlong down through the rocks, and fell with a fearful impetus just before his horse's hoofs and there lay like a huge palpitating carcass. The horse was scared, as, indeed, was his rider, too, and more so when this apparently lifeless thing sprang up to his legs, and throwing his arms apart to bar their further progress, advanced his white and gigantic face towards them. Then the horse started about, with a snort of terror, nearly unseating the priest, and broke away into a furious and uncontrollable gallop.

I need not recount all the strange and various misadventures which the honest priest sustained in his endeavours to visit the castle, and its isolated tenants. They were enough to wear out his resolution, and frighten him into submission. And so at last these spiritual visits quite ceased; and fearing to awaken inquiry and suspicion, he thought it only prudent to abstain from attempting them in the daytime.

So the young ladies of the castle were more alone than ever. Their father, whose visits were frequently of long duration, had of late ceased altogether to speak of their contemplated departure for France, grew angry at any allusion to it, and they feared, had abandoned the plan altogether.

CHAPTER IV

The Light in the Bell Tower

Shortly after the discontinuance of the priest's visits, old Laurence, one night, to his surprise, saw light issuing from a window in the Bell Tower. It was at first only a tremulous red ray, visible only for a few minutes, which seemed to pass from the room, through whose window it escaped upon the courtyard of the castle, and so to lose itself. This tower and casement were in the angle of the building, exactly confronting that in which the little outlawed family had taken up their quarters.

The whole family were troubled at the appearance of this dull red ray from the chamber in the Bell Tower. Nobody knew what to make of it. But Laurence, who had campaigned in Italy with his old master, the young ladies' grandfather— "the heavens be his bed this night!" — was resolved to see it out, and took his great horse-pistols with him, and ascended to the corridor leading to the tower. But his search was vain.

This light left a sense of great uneasiness among the inmates, and most certainly it was not pleasant to suspect the establishment of an independent and possibly dangerous lodger or even colony, within the walls of the same old building.

The light very soon appeared again, steadier and somewhat brighter, in the same chamber. Again old Laurence buckled on his armour, swearing ominously to himself, and this time bent in earnest upon conflict. The young ladies watched in thrilling suspense from the great window in *their* stronghold, looking diagonally across the court. But as Laurence, who had entered the massive range of buildings opposite, might be supposed to be approaching the chamber from which this ill-omened glare proceeded, it steadily waned, finally disappearing altogether, just a few seconds before his voice was heard shouting from the arched window to know which way the light had gone.

This lighting up of the great chamber of the Bell Tower grew at last to be of frequent and almost continual recurrence. It was, there, long ago, in times of trouble and danger, that the De Lacys of those evil days used to sit in feudal judgment upon captive adversaries, and, as tradition alleged, often gave them no more time for shrift and prayer, than it needed to mount to the battlement of the turret overhead, from which they were forthwith hung by the necks, for a caveat and admonition to all evil disposed persons viewing the same from the country beneath.

Old Laurence observed these mysterious glimmerings with an evil and an anxious eye, and many and various were the stratagems he tried, but in vain, to surprise the audacious intruders. It is, however, I believe, a fact that no phenomenon, no matter how startling at first, if prosecuted with tolerable regularity, and unattended with any new circumstances of terror, will very long continue to excite alarm or even wonder.

So the family came to acquiesce in this mysterious light. No harm accompanied it. Old Laurence, as he smoked his lonely pipe in the grass-grown courtyard, would cast a disturbed glance at it, as it softly glowed out through the darkening aperture, and mutter a prayer or an oath. But he had given over the chase as a hopeless business. And Peggy Sullivan, the old dame of all work, when, by chance, for she never willingly looked toward the haunted quarter, she caught the faint reflection of its dull effulgence with the corner of her eye, would sign herself with the cross or fumble at her beads, and deeper furrows would gather in her forehead, and her face grow ashen and perturbed. And this was not mended by the levity with which the young ladies, with whom the spectre had lost his influence, familiarity, as usual, breeding contempt, had come to talk, and even to jest, about it.

CHAPTER V

The Man with the Claret Mark

But as the former excitement flagged, old Peggy Sullivan produced a new one; for she solemnly avowed that she had seen a thin-faced man, with an ugly red mark all over the side of his cheek, looking out of the same window, just at sunset, before the young ladies returned from their evening walk.

This sounded in their ears like an old woman's dream, but still it was an excitement, jocular in the morning, and just, perhaps, a little fearful as night overspread the vast and desolate building, but still, not wholly unpleasant. This little flicker of credulity suddenly, however, blazed up into the full light of conviction.

Old Laurence, who was not given to dreaming, and had a cool, hard head, and an eye like a hawk, saw the same figure, just about the same hour, when the last level gleam of sunset was tinting the summits of the towers and the tops of the tall trees that surrounded them.

He had just entered the court from the great gate, when he heard all at once the hard peculiar twitter of alarm which sparrows make when a cat or a hawk invades their safety, rising all round from the thick ivy that overclimbed the wall on his left, and raising his eyes listlessly, he saw, with a sort of shock, a thin, ungainly man, standing with his legs crossed, in the recess of the window from which the light was wont to issue, leaning with his elbows on the stone mullion, and looking down with a sort of sickly sneer, his hollow yellow cheeks being deeply stained on one side with what is called a "claret-mark."

"I have you at last, you villain!" cried Larry, in a strange rage and panic: "drop down out of that on the grass here, and give yourself up, or I'll shoot you."

The threat was backed with an oath, and he drew from his coat pocket the long holster pistol he was wont to carry, and covered his man cleverly.

"I give you while I count ten — one-two-three-four. If you draw back, I'll fire, mind; five-six — you'd better be lively — seven-eight-nine — one chance more; will you come down? Then take it — ten!"

Bang went the pistol. The sinister stranger was hardly fifteen feet removed from him, and Larry was a dead shot. But this time he made a scandalous miss, for the shot knocked a little white dust from the stone wall a full yard at one side; and the fellow never shifted his negligent posture or qualified his sardonic smile during the procedure.

Larry was mortified and angry.

"You'll not get off this time, my tulip!" he said with a grin, exchanging the smoking weapon for the loaded pistol in reserve.

"What are you pistolling, Larry?" said a familiar voice close by his elbow, and he saw his master, accompanied by a handsome young man in a cloak.

"That villain, your honour, in the window, there."

"Why there's nobody there, Larry," said De Lacy, with a laugh, though that was no common indulgence with him.

As Larry gazed, the figure somehow dissolved and broke up without receding. A hanging tuft of yellow and red ivy nodded queerly in place of the face, some broken and discoloured masonry in perspective took up the outline and colouring of the arms and figure, and two imperfect red and yellow lichen streaks carried on the curved tracing of the long spindle shanks. Larry blessed himself, and drew his hand across his damp forehead, over his bewildered eyes, and could not speak for a minute. It was all some devilish trick; he could take his oath he saw every feature in the fellow's face, the lace and buttons of his cloak and doublet, and even his long finger nails and thin yellow fingers that overhung the cross-shaft of the window, where there was now nothing but a rusty stain left.

The young gentleman who had arrived with De Lacy, stayed that night and shared with great apparent relish the homely fare of the family. He was a gay and gallant Frenchman, and the beauty of the younger lady, and her pleasantry and spirit, seemed to make his hours pass but too swiftly, and the moment of parting sad.

When he had departed early in the morning, Ultor De Lacy had a long talk with his elder daughter, while the younger was busy with her early dairy task, for among their retainers this *proles generosa* reckoned a "kind" little Kerry cow.

He told her that he had visited France since he had been last at Capperellen, and how good and gracious their sovereign had been, and how he had arranged a noble alliance for her sister Una. The young gentleman was of high blood, and though not rich, had, nevertheless, his acres and his *nom de terre*, besides a captain's rank in the army. He was, in short, the very gentleman with whom they had parted only that morning. On what special business he was now in Ireland there was no necessity that he should speak; but being here he had brought him hither to present him to his daughter, and found that the impression she had made was quite what was desirable.

"You, you know, dear Alice, are promised to a conventual life. Had it been otherwise—"

He hesitated for a moment.

"You are right, dear father," she said, kissing his hand, "I *am* so promised, and no earthly tie or allurements has power to draw me from that holy engagement."

"Well," he said, returning her caress, "I do not mean to urge you upon that point. It must not, however, be until Una's marriage has taken place. That cannot be, for many good reasons, sooner than this time twelve months; we shall then exchange this strange and barbarous abode for Paris, where are many eligible convents, in which are entertained as sisters some of the noblest ladies of France; and there, too, in Una's marriage will be continued, though not the name, at all events the blood, the lineage, and the title which, so sure as justice ultimately governs the course of human events, will be again established, powerful and honoured in this country, the scene of their ancient glory and transitory misfortunes. Meanwhile, we must not mention this engagement to Una. Here she runs no risk of being sought or won; but the mere knowledge that her hand was absolutely pledged, might excite a capricious opposition and repining such as neither I nor you would like to see; therefore be secret."

The same evening he took Alice with him for a ramble round the castle wall, while they talked of grave matters, and he as usual allowed her a dim and doubtful view of some of those cloud-built castles in which he habitually dwelt, and among which his jaded hopes revived.

They were walking upon a pleasant short sward of darkest green, on one side overhung by the gray castle walls, and on the other by the forest trees that here and there closely approached it, when precisely as they turned the angle of the Bell Tower, they were encountered by a person walking directly towards them. The sight of a stranger, with the exception of the one visitor introduced by her father, was in this place so absolutely unprecedented, that Alice was amazed and affrighted to such a degree that for a moment she stood stock-still.

But there was more in this apparition to excite unpleasant emotions, than the mere circumstance of its unexpectedness. The figure was very strange, being that of a tall, lean, ungainly man, dressed in a dingy suit, somewhat of a Spanish fashion, with a brown laced cloak, and faded red stockings. He had long lank legs, long arms, hands, and fingers, and a very long sickly face, with a drooping nose, and a sly, sarcastic leer, and a great purplish stain overspreading more than half of one cheek.

As he strode past, he touched his cap with his thin, discoloured fingers, and an ugly side glance, and disappeared round the corner. The eyes of father and daughter followed him in silence.

Ultor De Lacy seemed first absolutely terror-stricken, and then suddenly inflamed with ungovernable fury. He dropped his cane on the ground, drew his rapier, and, without wasting a thought on his daughter, pursued.

He just had a glimpse of the retreating figure as it disappeared round the far angle. The plume, and the lank hair, the point of the rapier-scabbard, the flutter of the skirt of the cloak, and one red stocking and heel; and this was the last he saw of him.

When Alice reached his side, his drawn sword still in his hand, he was in a state of abject agitation.

"Thank Heaven, he's gone!" she exclaimed.

"He's gone," echoed Ultor, with a strange glare.

"And you are safe," she added, clasping his hand.

He sighed a great sigh.

"And you don't think he's coming back?"

"He! — who?"

"The stranger who passed us but now. Do you know him, father?"

"Yes — and — no, child — I know him not — and yet I know him too well. Would to heaven we could leave this accursed haunt tonight. Cursed be the stupid malice that first provoked this horrible feud, which no sacrifice and misery can appease, and no exorcism can quell or even suspend. The wretch has come from afar with a sure instinct to devour my last hope — to dog us into our last retreat — and to blast with his triumph the very dust and ruins of our house. What ails that stupid priest that he has given over his visits? Are *my* children to be left without mass or confession — the sacraments which *guard* as well as save — because he once loses his way in a mist, or mistakes a streak of foam in the brook for a dead man's face? D — n him!"

"See, Alice, if he won't come," he resumed, "you must only *write* your confession to him in full — you and Una. Laurence is trusty, and will carry it — and we'll get the bishop's — or, if need be, the Pope's leave for him to give you absolution. I'll move heaven and earth, but you *shall* have the sacraments, poor children! — and see him. I've been a wild fellow in my youth, and never pretended to sanctity; but I know there's but one safe way — and — and — keep you each a bit of this — (he opened a small silver box) — about you while you stay here — fold and sew it up reverently in a bit of the old psalter parchment and wear it next your hearts — 'tis a fragment of the consecrated wafer — and will help, with the saints' protection, to guard you from harm — and be strict in fasts, and constant in prayer — *I* can do nothing — nor devise any help. The curse has fallen, indeed, on me and mine."

And Alice, saw, in silence, the tears of despair roll down his pale and agitated face.

This adventure was also a secret, and Una was to hear nothing of it.

CHAPTER VI

Voices

Now Una, nobody knew why, began to lose spirit, and to grow pale. Her fun and frolic were quite gone! Even her songs ceased. She was silent with her sister, and loved solitude better. She said she was well, and quite happy, and could in no wise be got to account for the lamentable change that had stolen over her. She had grown odd too, and obstinate in trifles; and strangely reserved and cold.

Alice was very unhappy in consequence. What was the cause of this estrangement — had she offended her, and how? But Una had never before borne resentment for an hour. What could have altered her entire nature so? Could it be the shadow and chill of coming insanity?

Once or twice, when her sister urged her with tears and entreaties to disclose the secret of her changed spirits and demeanour, she seemed to listen with a sort of silent wonder and suspicion, and then she looked for a moment full upon her, and seemed on the very point of revealing all. But the earnest dilated gaze stole downward to the floor, and subsided into an odd wily smile, and she began to whisper to herself, and the smile and the whisper were both a mystery to Alice.

She and Alice slept in the same bedroom — a chamber in a projecting tower — which on their arrival, when poor Una was so merry, they had hung round with old tapestry, and decorated fantastically according to their skill and frolic. One night, as they went to bed, Una said, as if speaking to herself —

“’Tis my last night in this room — I shall sleep no more with Alice.”

“And what has poor Alice done, Una, to deserve your strange unkindness?”

Una looked on her curiously, and half frightened, and then the odd smile stole over her face like a gleam of moonlight.

“My poor Alice, what have you to do with it?” she whispered.

“And why do you talk of sleeping no more with me?” said Alice.

“Why? Alice dear — no why — no reason — only a knowledge that it must be so, or Una will die.”

“Die, Una darling! — what can you mean?”

“Yes, sweet Alice, die, indeed. We must all die some time, you know, or — or undergo a change; and my time is near — *very* near — unless I sleep apart from you.”

“Indeed, Una, sweetheart, I think you *are* ill, but not near death.”

“Una knows what you think, wise Alice — but she’s not mad — on the contrary, she’s wiser than other folks.”

“She’s sadder and stranger too,” said Alice, tenderly.

“Knowledge is sorrow,” answered Una, and she looked across the room through her golden hair which she was combing — and through the window, beyond which lay the tops of the great trees, and the still foliage of the glen in the misty moonlight.

“’Tis enough, Alice dear; it must be so. The bed must move hence, or Una’s bed will be low enough ere long. See, it shan’t be far though, only into that small room.”

She pointed to an inner room or closet opening from that in which they lay. The walls of the building were hugely thick, and there were double doors of oak between the chambers, and Alice thought, with a sigh, how completely separated they were going to be.

However she offered no opposition. The change was made, and the girls for the first time since childhood lay in separate chambers. A few nights afterwards Alice awoke late in the night from a dreadful dream, in which the sinister figure which she and her father had encountered in their ramble round the castle walls, bore a principal part.

When she awoke there were still in her ears the sounds which had mingled in her dream. They were the notes of a deep, ringing, bass voice rising from the glen beneath the castle walls — something between humming and singing — listlessly unequal and intermittent, like the melody of a man whiling away the hours over his work. While she was wondering at this unwonted minstrelsy, there came a silence, and — could she believe her ears? — it certainly was Una’s clear low contralto — softly singing a bar or two from the window. Then once more silence — and then again the strange manly voice, faintly chaunting from the leafy abyss.

With a strange wild feeling of suspicion and terror, Alice glided to the window. The moon who sees so many things, and keeps all secrets, with her cold impenetrable smile, was high in the sky. But Alice saw the red flicker of a candle from Una’s window, and, she thought, the shadow of her head against the deep side wall of its recess. Then this was gone, and there were no more sights or sounds that night.

As they sate at breakfast, the small birds were singing merrily from among the sun-tipped foliage.

“I love this music,” said Alice, unusually pale and sad; “it comes with the pleasant light of morning. I remember, Una, when you used to sing, like those gay birds, in the fresh beams of the morning; that was in the old time, when Una kept no secret from poor Alice.”

“And Una knows what her sage Alice means; but there are other birds, silent all day long, and, they say, the sweetest too, that love to sing by *night* alone.”

So things went on — the elder girl pained and melancholy — the younger silent, changed, and unaccountable.

A little while after this, very late one night, on awaking, Alice heard a conversation being carried on in her sister’s room. There seemed to be no disguise about it. She could not distinguish the words, indeed, the walls being some six feet thick, and two great oak doors intercepting. But Una’s clear voice, and the deep bell-like tones of the unknown, made up the dialogue.

Alice sprung from her bed, threw her clothes about her, and tried to enter her sister’s room; but the inner door was bolted. The voices ceased to speak as she knocked, and Una opened it, and stood before her in her nightdress, candle in hand.

"Una — Una, darling, as you hope for peace, tell me who is here?" cried frightened Alice, with her trembling arms about her neck.

Una drew back, with her large innocent blue eyes fixed full upon her.

"Come in, Alice," she said, coldly.

And in came Alice, with a fearful glance around. There was no hiding place there; a chair, a table, a little bedstead, and two or three pegs in the wall to hang clothes on; a narrow window, with two iron bars across; no hearth or chimney — nothing but bare walls.

Alice looked round in amazement, and her eyes glanced with painful inquiry into those of her sister. Una smiled one of her peculiar sidelong smiles, and said —

"Strange dreams! I've been dreaming — so has Alice. She hears and sees Una's dreams, and wonders — and well she may."

And she kissed her sister's cheek with a cold kiss, and lay down in her little bed, her slender hand under her head, and spoke no more.

Alice, not knowing what to think, went back to hers.

About this time Ultor De Lacy returned. He heard his elder daughter's strange narrative with marked uneasiness, and his agitation seemed to grow rather than subside. He enjoined her, however, not to mention it to the old servant, nor in presence of anybody she might chance to see, but only to him and to the priest, if he could be persuaded to resume his duty and return. The trial, however, such as it was, could not endure very long; matters had turned out favourably. The union of his younger daughter might be accomplished within a few months, and in eight or nine weeks they should be on their way to Paris.

A night or two after her father's arrival, Alice, in the dead of the night, heard the well-known strange deep voice speaking softly, as it seemed, close to her own window on the outside; and Una's voice, clear and tender, spoke in answer. She hurried to her own casement, and pushed it open, kneeling in the deep embrasure, and looking with a stealthy and affrighted gaze towards her sister's window. As she crossed the floor the voices subsided, and she saw a light withdrawn from within. The moonbeams slanted bright and clear on the whole side of the castle overlooking the glen, and she plainly beheld the shadow of a man projected on the wall as on a screen.

This black shadow recalled with a horrid thrill the outline and fashion of the figure in the Spanish dress. There were the cap and mantle, the rapier, the long thin limbs and sinister angularity. It was so thrown obliquely that the hands reached to the windowsill, and the feet stretched and stretched, longer and longer as she looked, toward the ground, and disappeared in the general darkness; and the rest, with a sudden flicker, shot downwards, as shadows will on the sudden movement of a light, and was lost in one gigantic leap down the castle wall.

"I do not know whether I dream or wake when I hear and see these sights; but I will ask my father to sit up with me, and we *two* surely cannot be mistaken. May the holy saints keep and guard us!" And in her terror she buried her head under the bedclothes, and whispered her prayers for an hour.

CHAPTER VII

Una's Love

"I have been with Father Denis," said De Lacy, next day, "and he will come tomorrow; and, thank Heaven! you may both make your confession and hear mass, and my mind will be at rest; and you'll find poor Una happier and more like herself."

But 'tween cup and lip there's many a slip. The priest was not destined to hear poor Una's shrift. When she bid her sister goodnight she looked on her with her large, cold, wild eyes, till something of her old human affections seemed to gather there, and they slowly filled with tears, which dropped one after the other on her homely dress as she gazed in her sister's face.

Alice, delighted, sprang up, and clasped her arms about her neck. "My own darling treasure, 'tis all over; you love your poor Alice again, and will be happier than ever."

But while she held her in her embrace Una's eyes were turned towards the window, and her lips apart, and Alice felt instinctively that her thoughts were already far away.

"Hark! — listen! — hush!" and Una, with her delighted gaze fixed, as if she saw far away beyond the castle wall, the trees, the glen, and the night's dark curtain, held her hand raised near her ear, and waved her head slightly in time, as it seemed, to music that reached not Alice's ear, and smiled her strange pleased smile, and then the smile slowly faded away, leaving that sly suspicious light behind it which somehow scared her sister with an uncertain sense of danger; and she sang in tones so sweet and low that it seemed but a reverie of a song, recalling, as Alice fancied, the strain to which she had just listened in that strange ecstasy, the plaintive and beautiful Irish ballad, "Shule, shule, shule, aroon," the midnight summons of the outlawed Irish soldier to his darling to follow him.

Alice had slept little the night before. She was now overpowered with fatigue; and leaving her candle burning by her bedside, she fell into a deep sleep. From this she awoke suddenly, and completely, as will sometimes happen without any apparent cause, and she saw Una come into the room. She had a little purse of embroidery — her own work — in her hand; and she stole lightly to the bedside, with her peculiar oblique smile, and evidently thinking that her sister was asleep.

Alice was thrilled with a strange terror, and did not speak or move; and her sister slipped her hand softly under her bolster, and withdrew it. Then Una stood for while by the hearth, and stretched her hand up to the mantelpiece, from which she took a little bit of chalk, and Alice thought she saw her place it in the fingers of a long yellow hand that was stealthily introduced from her own chamber-door to receive it; and Una paused in the dark recess of the door, and smiled over her shoulder toward her sister, and then glided into her room, closing the doors.

Almost freezing with terror, Alice rose and glided after her, and stood in her chamber, screaming —

"Una, Una, in heaven's name what troubles you?"

But Una seemed to have been sound asleep in her bed, and raised herself with a start, and looking upon her with a peevish surprise, said —

"What does Alice seek here?"

"You were in my room, Una, dear; you seem disturbed and troubled."

"Dreams, Alice. My dreams crossing your brain; only dreams — dreams. Get you to bed, and sleep."

And to bed she went, but *not* to sleep. She lay awake more than an hour; and then Una emerged once more from her room. This time she was fully dressed, and had her cloak and thick shoes on, as their rattle on the floor plainly discovered. She had a little bundle tied up in a handkerchief in her hand, and her hood was drawn about her head; and thus equipped, as it seemed, for a journey, she came and stood at the foot of Alice's bed, and stared on her with a look so soulless and terrible that her senses almost forsook her. Then she turned and went back into her own chamber.

She may have returned; but Alice thought not — at least she did not see her. But she lay in great excitement and perturbation; and was terrified, about an hour later, by a knock at her chamber door — not that opening into Una's room, but upon the little passage from the stone screw staircase. She sprang from her bed; but the door was secured on the inside, and she felt relieved. The knock was repeated, and she heard some one laughing softly on the outside.

The morning came at last; that dreadful night was over. But Una! Where was Una?

Alice never saw her more. On the head of her empty bed were traced in chalk the words — Ultor De Lacy, Ultor O'Donnell. And Alice found beneath her own pillow the little purse of embroidery she had seen in Una's hand. It was her little parting token, and bore the simple legend — "Una's love!"

De Lacy's rage and horror were boundless. He charged the priest, in frantic language, with having exposed his child, by his cowardice and neglect, to the machinations of the Fiend, and raved and blasphemed like a man demented.

It is said that he procured a solemn exorcism to be performed, in the hope of disenthraling and recovering his daughter. Several times, it is alleged, she was seen by the old servants. Once on a sweet summer morning, in the window of the tower, she was perceived combing her beautiful golden tresses, and holding a little mirror in her hand; and first, when she saw herself discovered, she looked affrighted, and then smiled, her slanting, cunning smile. Sometimes, too, in the glen, by moonlight, it was said belated villagers had met her, always startled first, and then smiling, generally singing snatches of old Irish ballads, that seemed to bear a sort of dim resemblance to her melancholy fate. The apparition has long ceased. But it is said that now and again, perhaps once in two or three years, late on a summer night, you may hear — but faint and far away in the recesses of the glen — the sweet, sad notes of Una's voice, singing those plaintive melodies. This, too, of course, in time will cease, and all be forgotten.

CHAPTER VIII

Sister Agnes and the Portrait

When Ultor De Lacy died, his daughter Alice found among his effects a small box, containing a portrait such as I have described. When she looked on it, she recoiled in horror. There, in the plenitude of its sinister peculiarities, was faithfully portrayed the phantom which lived with a vivid and horrible accuracy in her remembrance. Folded in the same box was a brief narrative, stating that, "A.D. 1601, in the month of December, Walter De Lacy, of Capperullen, made many prisoners at the ford of Ownhey, or Abington, of Irish and Spanish soldiers, flying from the great overthrow of the rebel powers at Kinsale, and among the number one Roderic O'Donnell, an arch traitor, and near kinsman to that other O'Donnell who led the rebels; who, claiming kindred through his mother to De Lacy, sued for his life with instant and miserable entreaty, and offered great ransom, but was by De Lacy, through great zeal for the queen, as some thought, cruelly put to death. When he went to the tower-top, where was the gallows, finding himself in extremity, and no hope of mercy, he swore that though he could work them no evil before his death, yet that he would devote himself thereafter to blast the greatness of the De Lacys, and never leave them till his work was done. He hath been seen often since, and always for that family perniciously, insomuch that it hath been the custom to show to young children of that lineage the picture of the said O'Donnell, in little, taken among his few valuables, to prevent their being misled by him unawares, so that he should not have his will, who by devilish wiles and hell-born cunning, hath steadfastly sought the ruin of that ancient house, and especially to leave that *stemma generosum* destitute of issue for the transmission of their pure blood and worshipful name."

Old Miss Croker, of Ross House, who was near seventy in the year 1821, when she related this story to me, had seen and conversed with Alice De Lacy, a professed nun, under the name of Sister Agnes, in a religious house in King-street, in Dublin, founded by the famous Duchess of Tyrconnell, and had the narrative from her own lips. I thought the tale worth preserving, and have no more to say.

GHOST STORIES OF CHAPELIZOD

Take my word for it, there is no such thing as an ancient village, especially if it has seen better days, unillustrated by its legends of terror. You might as well expect to find a decayed cheese without mites, or an old house without rats, as an antique and dilapidated town without an authentic population of goblins. Now, although this class of inhabitants are in nowise amenable to the police authorities, yet, as their demeanor directly affects the comforts of her Majesty's subjects, I cannot but regard it as a grave omission that the public have hitherto been left without any statistical returns of their numbers, activity, etc., etc. And I am persuaded that a Commission to inquire into and report upon the numerical strength, habits, haunts, etc., etc., of supernatural agents resident in Ireland, would be a great deal more innocent and entertaining than half the Commissions for which the country pays, and at least as instructive. This I say, more from a sense of duty, and to deliver my mind of a grave truth, than with any hope of seeing the suggestion adopted. But, I am sure, my readers will deplore with me that the comprehensive powers of belief, and apparently illimitable leisure, possessed by parliamentary commissions of inquiry, should never have been applied to the subject I have named, and that the collection of that species of information should be confided to the gratuitous and desultory labours of individuals, who, like myself, have other occupations to attend to. This, however, by the way.

Among the village outposts of Dublin, Chapelizod once held a considerable, if not a foremost rank. Without mentioning its connexion with the history of the great Kilmainham Preceptory of the Knights of St. John, it will be enough to remind the reader of its ancient and celebrated Castle, not one vestige of which now remains, and of the fact that it was for, we believe, some centuries, the summer residence of the Viceroy of Ireland. The circumstance of its being up, we believe, to the period at which that corps was disbanded, the headquarters of the Royal Irish Artillery, gave it also a consequence of an humbler, but not less substantial kind. With these advantages in its favour, it is not wonderful that the town exhibited at one time an air of substantial and semi-aristocratic prosperity unknown to Irish villages in modern times.

A broad street, with a well-paved footpath, and houses as lofty as were at that time to be found in the fashionable streets of Dublin; a goodly stone-fronted barrack; an ancient church, vaulted beneath, and with a tower clothed from its summit to its base with the richest ivy; an humble Roman Catholic chapel; a steep bridge spanning the Liffey, and a great old mill at the near end of it, were the principal features of the town. These, or at least most of them, remain still, but the greater part in a very changed and forlorn condition. Some of them indeed are superseded, though not obliterated by modern erections, such as the bridge, the chapel, and the church in part; the rest forsaken by the order who originally raised them, and delivered up to poverty, and in some cases to absolute decay.

The village lies in the lap of the rich and wooded valley of the Liffey, and is overlooked by the high grounds of the beautiful Phoenix Park on the one side, and by the ridge of the Palmerstown hills on the other. Its situation, therefore, is eminently picturesque; and factory-fronts and chimneys notwithstanding, it has, I think, even in its decay, a sort of melancholy picturesqueness of its own. Be that as it may, I mean to relate two or three stories of that sort which may be read with very good effect by a blazing fire on a shrewd winter's night, and are all directly connected with the altered and somewhat melancholy little town I have named. The first I shall relate concerns

The Village Bully

About thirty years ago there lived in the town of Chapelizod an ill-conditioned fellow of herculean strength, well known throughout the neighbourhood by the title of Bully Larkin. In addition to his remarkable physical superiority, this fellow had acquired a degree of skill as a pugilist which alone would have made him formidable. As it was, he was the autocrat of the village, and carried not the sceptre in vain. Conscious of his superiority, and perfectly secure of impunity, he lorded it over his fellows in a spirit of cowardly and brutal insolence, which made him hated even more profoundly than he was feared.

Upon more than one occasion he had deliberately forced quarrels upon men whom he had singled out for the exhibition of his savage prowess; and in every encounter his overmatched antagonist had received an amount of "punishment" which edified and appalled the spectators, and in some instances left ineffaceable scars and lasting injuries after it.

Bully Larkin's pluck had never been fairly tried. For, owing to his prodigious superiority in weight, strength, and skill, his victories had always been certain and easy; and in proportion to the facility with which he uniformly smashed an antagonist, his pugnacity and insolence were inflamed. He thus became an odious nuisance in the neighbourhood, and the terror of every mother who had a son, and of every wife who had a husband who possessed a spirit to resent insult, or the smallest confidence in his own pugilistic capabilities.

Now it happened that there was a young fellow named Ned Moran — better known by the soubriquet of "Long Ned," from his slender, lathy proportions — at that time living in the town. He was, in truth, a mere lad, nineteen years of age, and fully twelve years younger than the stalwart bully. This, however, as the reader will see, secured for him no exemption from the dastardly provocations of the ill-conditioned pugilist. Long Ned, in an evil hour, had thrown eyes of affection upon a certain buxom damsel, who, notwithstanding Bully Larkin's amorous rivalry, inclined to reciprocate them.

I need not say how easily the spark of jealousy, once kindled, is blown into a flame, and how naturally, in a coarse and ungoverned nature, it explodes in acts of violence and outrage.

"The bully" watched his opportunity, and contrived to provoke Ned Moran, while drinking in a public-house with a party of friends, into an altercation, in the course of which he failed not to put such insults upon his rival as manhood could not tolerate. Long Ned, though a simple, goodnatured sort of fellow, was by no means deficient in spirit, and retorted in a tone of defiance which edified the more timid, and gave his opponent the opportunity he secretly coveted.

Bully Larkin challenged the heroic youth, whose pretty face he had privately consigned to the mangling and bloody discipline he was himself so capable of administering. The quarrel, which he had himself contrived to get up, to a certain degree covered the ill blood and malignant premeditation which inspired his proceedings, and Long Ned, being full of generous ire and whiskey punch, accepted the gauge of battle on the instant. The whole party, accompanied by a mob of idle men and boys, and in short by

all who could snatch a moment from the calls of business, proceeded in slow procession through the old gate into the Phoenix Park, and mounting the hill overlooking the town, selected near its summit a level spot on which to decide the quarrel.

The combatants stripped, and a child might have seen in the contrast presented by the slight, lank form and limbs of the lad, and the muscular and massive build of his veteran antagonist, how desperate was the chance of poor Ned Moran.

"Seconds" and "bottle-holders" — selected of course for their love of the game — were appointed, and "the fight" commenced.

I will not shock my readers with a description of the cool-blooded butchery that followed. The result of the combat was what anybody might have predicted. At the eleventh round, poor Ned refused to "give in"; the brawny pugilist, unhurt, in good wind, and pale with concentrated and as yet unslaked revenge, had the gratification of seeing his opponent seated upon his second's knee, unable to hold up his head, his left arm disabled; his face a bloody, swollen, and shapeless mass; his breast scarred and bloody, and his whole body panting and quivering with rage and exhaustion.

"Give in, Ned, my boy," cried more than one of the bystanders.

"Never, never," shrieked he, with a voice hoarse and choking.

Time being "up," his second placed him on his feet again. Blinded with his own blood, panting and staggering, he presented but a helpless mark for the blows of his stalwart opponent. It was plain that a touch would have been sufficient to throw him to the earth. But Larkin had no notion of letting him off so easily. He closed with him without striking a blow (the effect of which, prematurely dealt, would have been to bring him at once to the ground, and so put an end to the combat), and getting his battered and almost senseless head under his arm, fast in that peculiar "fix" known to the fancy pleasantly by the name of "chancery," he held him firmly, while with monotonous and brutal strokes he beat his fist, as it seemed, almost into his face. A cry of "shame" broke from the crowd, for it was plain that the beaten man was now insensible, and supported only by the herculean arm of the bully. The round and the fight ended by his hurling him upon the ground, falling upon him at the same time with his knee upon his chest.

The bully rose, wiping the perspiration from his white face with his bloodstained hands, but Ned lay stretched and motionless upon the grass. It was impossible to get him upon his legs for another round. So he was carried down, just as he was, to the pond which then lay close to the old Park gate, and his head and body were washed beside it. Contrary to the belief of all he was not dead. He was carried home, and after some months to a certain extent recovered. But he never held up his head again, and before the year was over he had died of consumption. Nobody could doubt how the disease had been induced, but there was no actual proof to connect the cause and effect, and the ruffian Larkin escaped the vengeance of the law. A strange retribution, however, awaited him.

After the death of Long Ned, he became less quarrelsome than before, but more sullen and reserved. Some said "he took it to heart," and others, that his conscience was not at ease about it. Be this as it may, however, his health did not suffer by reason of his presumed agitations, nor was his worldly prosperity marred by the blasting curses with which poor Moran's enraged mother pursued him; on the contrary he had rather risen in the world, and obtained regular and well-remunerated employment from the Chief Secretary's gardener, at the other side of the Park. He still lived in Chapelizod, whither, on the close of his day's work, he used to return across the Fifteen Acres.

It was about three years after the catastrophe we have mentioned, and late in the autumn, when, one night, contrary to his habit, he did not appear at the house where he lodged, neither had he been seen anywhere, during the evening, in the village. His hours of return had been so very regular, that his absence excited considerable surprise, though, of course, no actual alarm; and, at the usual hour, the house was closed for the night, and the absent lodger consigned to the mercy of the elements, and the care of his presiding star. Early in the morning, however, he was found lying in a state of utter helplessness upon the slope immediately overlooking the Chapelizod gate. He had been smitten with a paralytic stroke: his right side was dead; and it was many weeks before he had recovered his speech sufficiently to make himself at all understood.

He then made the following relation: — He had been detained, it appeared, later than usual, and darkness had closed before he commenced his homeward walk across the Park. It was a moonlit night, but masses of ragged clouds were slowly drifting across the heavens. He had not encountered a human figure, and no sounds but the softened rush of the wind sweeping through bushes and hollows met his ear. These wild and monotonous sounds, and the utter solitude which surrounded him, did not, however, excite any of those uneasy sensations which are ascribed to superstition, although he said he did feel depressed, or, in his own phraseology, "lonesome." Just as he crossed the brow of the hill which shelters the town of Chapelizod, the moon shone out for some moments with unclouded lustre, and his eye, which happened to wander by the shadowy enclosures which lay at the foot of the slope, was arrested by the sight of a human figure climbing, with all the haste of one pursued, over the churchyard wall, and running up the steep ascent directly towards him. Stories of "resurrectionists" crossed his recollection, as he observed this suspicious-looking figure. But he began, momentarily, to be aware with a sort of fearful instinct which he could not explain, that the running figure was directing his steps, with a sinister purpose, towards himself.

The form was that of a man with a loose coat about him, which, as he ran, he disengaged, and as well as Larkin could see, for the moon was again wading in clouds, threw from him. The figure thus advanced until within some two score yards of him, it arrested its speed, and approached with a loose, swaggering gait. The moon again shone out bright and clear, and, gracious God! what was the spectacle before him? He saw as distinctly as if he had been presented there in the flesh, Ned Moran, himself, stripped naked from the waist upward, as if for pugilistic combat, and drawing towards him in silence. Larkin would have shouted, prayed, cursed, fled across the Park, but he was absolutely powerless; the apparition stopped within a few steps, and leered on him with a ghastly mimicry of the defiant stare with which pugilists strive to cow one another before combat. For a time, which he could not so much as conjecture, he was held in the fascination of that unearthly gaze, and at last the thing, whatever it was, on a sudden swaggered close up to him with extended palms. With an impulse of horror, Larkin put out his hand to keep the figure off, and their palms touched — at least, so he believed — for a thrill of unspeakable agony, running through his arm, pervaded his entire frame, and he fell senseless to the earth.

Though Larkin lived for many years after, his punishment was terrible. He was incurably maimed; and being unable to work, he was forced, for existence, to beg alms of those who had once feared and flattered him. He suffered, too, increasingly, under

his own horrible interpretation of the preternatural encounter which was the beginning of all his miseries. It was vain to endeavour to shake his faith in the reality of the apparition, and equally vain, as some compassionately did, to try to persuade him that the greeting with which his vision closed was intended, while inflicting a temporary trial, to signify a compensating reconciliation.

"No, no," he used to say, "all won't do. I know the meaning of it well enough; it is a challenge to meet him in the other world — in Hell, where I am going — that's what it means, and nothing else."

And so, miserable and refusing comfort, he lived on for some years, and then died, and was buried in the same narrow churchyard which contains the remains of his victim.

I need hardly say, how absolute was the faith of the honest inhabitants, at the time when I heard the story, in the reality of the preternatural summons which, through the portals of terror, sickness, and misery, had summoned Bully Larkin to his long, last home, and that, too, upon the very ground on which he had signalled the guiltiest triumph of his violent and vindictive career.

I recollect another story of the preternatural sort, which made no small sensation, some five-and-thirty years ago, among the good gossips of the town; and, with your leave, courteous reader, I shall relate it.

The Sexton's Adventure

Those who remember Chapelizod a quarter of a century ago, or more, may possibly recollect the parish sexton. Bob Martin was held much in awe by truant boys who sauntered into the churchyard on Sundays, to read the tombstones, or play leap frog over them, or climb the ivy in search of bats or sparrows' nests, or peep into the mysterious aperture under the eastern window, which opened a dim perspective of descending steps losing themselves among profounder darkness, where lidless coffins gaped horribly among tattered velvet, bones, and dust, which time and mortality had strewn there. Of such horribly curious, and otherwise enterprising juveniles, Bob was, of course, the special scourge and terror. But terrible as was the official aspect of the sexton, and repugnant as his lank form, clothed in rusty, sable vesture, his small, frosty visage, suspicious grey eyes, and rusty, brown scratch-wig, might appear to all notions of genial frailty; it was yet true, that Bob Martin's severe morality sometimes nodded, and that Bacchus did not always solicit him in vain.

Bob had a curious mind, a memory well stored with "merry tales," and tales of terror. His profession familiarized him with graves and goblins, and his tastes with weddings, wassail, and sly frolics of all sorts. And as his personal recollections ran back nearly three score years into the perspective of the village history, his fund of local anecdote was copious, accurate, and edifying.

As his ecclesiastical revenues were by no means considerable, he was not unfrequently obliged, for the indulgence of his tastes, to arts which were, at the best, undignified.

He frequently invited himself when his entertainers had forgotten to do so; he dropped in accidentally upon small drinking parties of his acquaintance in public houses, and entertained them with stories, queer or terrible, from his inexhaustible reservoir, never scrupling to accept an acknowledgment in the shape of hot whiskey-punch, or whatever else was going.

There was at that time a certain atrabilious publican, called Philip Slaney, established in a shop nearly opposite the old turnpike. This man was not, when left to himself, immoderately given to drinking; but being naturally of a saturnine complexion, and his spirits constantly requiring a fillip, he acquired a prodigious liking for Bob Martin's company. The sexton's society, in fact, gradually became the solace of his existence, and he seemed to lose his constitutional melancholy in the fascination of his sly jokes and marvellous stories.

This intimacy did not redound to the prosperity or reputation of the convivial allies. Bob Martin drank a good deal more punch than was good for his health, or consistent with the character of an ecclesiastical functionary. Philip Slaney, too, was drawn into similar indulgences, for it was hard to resist the genial seductions of his gifted companion; and as he was obliged to pay for both, his purse was believed to have suffered even more than his head and liver.

Be this as it may, Bob Martin had the credit of having made a drunkard of "black Phil Slaney" — for by this cognomen was he distinguished; and Phil Slaney had also the reputation of having made the sexton, if possible, a "bigger bliggard" than ever. Under these circumstances, the accounts of the concern opposite the turnpike became somewhat entangled; and it came to pass one drowsy summer morning, the weather being at once sultry and cloudy, that Phil Slaney went into a small back parlour, where he kept his books, and which commanded, through its dirty window-panes, a full view of a dead wall, and having bolted the door, he took a loaded pistol, and clapping the muzzle in his mouth, blew the upper part of his skull through the ceiling.

This horrid catastrophe shocked Bob Martin extremely; and partly on this account, and partly because having been, on several late occasions, found at night in a state of abstraction, bordering on insensibility, upon the high road, he had been threatened with dismissal; and, as some said, partly also because of the difficulty of finding anybody to "treat" him as poor Phil Slaney used to do, he for a time forswore alcohol in all its combinations, and became an eminent example of temperance and sobriety.

Bob observed his good resolutions, greatly to the comfort of his wife, and the edification of the neighbourhood, with tolerable punctuality. He was seldom tipsy, and never drunk, and was greeted by the better part of society with all the honours of the prodigal son.

Now it happened, about a year after the grisly event we have mentioned, that the curate having received, by the post, due notice of a funeral to be consummated in the churchyard of Chapelizod, with certain instructions respecting the site of the grave, despatched a summons for Bob Martin, with a view to communicate to that functionary these official details.

It was a lowering autumn night: piles of lurid thunderclouds, slowly rising from the earth, had loaded the sky with a solemn and boding canopy of storm. The growl of the distant thunder was heard afar off upon the dull, still air, and all nature seemed, as it were, hushed and cowering under the oppressive influence of the approaching tempest.

It was past nine o'clock when Bob, putting on his official coat of seedy black, prepared to attend his professional superior.

"Bobby, darlin'," said his wife, before she delivered the hat she held in her hand to his keeping, "sure you won't, Bobby, darlin' — you won't — you know what."

"I *don't* know what," he retorted, smartly, grasping at his hat.

"You won't be throwing up the little finger, Bobby, acushla?" she said, evading his grasp.

"Arrah, why would I, woman? there, give me my hat, will you?"

"But won't you promise me, Bobby darlin' — won't you, alanna?"

"Ay, ay, to be sure I will — why not? — there, give me my hat, and let me go."

"Ay, but you're not promisin', Bobby, mavourneen; you're not promisin' all the time."

"Well, devil carry me if I drink a drop till I come back again," said the sexton, angrily; "will that do you? And *now* will you give me my hat?"

"Here it is, darlin'," she said, "and God send you safe back."

And with this parting blessing she closed the door upon his retreating figure, for it was now quite dark, and resumed her knitting till his return, very much relieved; for she thought he had of late been oftener tipsy than was consistent with his thorough reformation, and feared the allurements of the half dozen "publics" which he had at that time to pass on his way to the other end of the town.

They were still open, and exhaled a delicious reek of whiskey, as Bob glided wistfully by them; but he stuck his hands in his pockets and looked the other way, whistling resolutely, and filling his mind with the image of the curate and anticipations of his coming fee. Thus he steered his morality safely through these rocks of offence, and reached the curate's lodging in safety.

He had, however, an unexpected sick call to attend, and was not at home, so that Bob Martin had to sit in the hall and amuse himself with the devil's tattoo until his return. This, unfortunately, was very long delayed, and it must have been fully twelve o'clock when Bob Martin set out upon his homeward way. By this time the storm had gathered to a pitchy darkness, the bellowing thunder was heard among the rocks and hollows of the Dublin mountains, and the pale, blue lightning shone upon the staring fronts of the houses.

By this time, too, every door was closed; but as Bob trudged homeward, his eye mechanically sought the public-house which had once belonged to Phil Slaney. A faint light was making its way through the shutters and the glass panes over the doorway, which made a sort of dull, foggy halo about the front of the house.

As Bob's eyes had become accustomed to the obscurity by this time, the light in question was quite sufficient to enable him to see a man in a sort of loose riding-coat seated upon a bench which, at that time, was fixed under the window of the house. He wore his hat very much over his eyes, and was smoking a long pipe. The outline of a glass and a quart bottle were also dimly traceable beside him; and a large horse saddled, but faintly discernible, was patiently awaiting his master's leisure.

There was something odd, no doubt, in the appearance of a traveller refreshing himself at such an hour in the open street; but the sexton accounted for it easily by supposing that, on the closing of the house for the night, he had taken what remained of his refecton to the place where he was now discussing it al fresco.

At another time Bob might have saluted the stranger as he passed with a friendly "good night"; but, somehow, he was out of humour and in no genial mood, and was about passing without any courtesy of the sort, when the stranger, without taking the pipe from his mouth, raised the bottle, and with it beckoned him familiarly, while, with a sort of lurch of the head and shoulders, and at the same time shifting his seat to the end of the bench, he pantomimically invited him to share his seat and his cheer. There was a divine fragrance of whiskey about the spot, and Bob half relented; but he remembered his promise just as he began to waver, and said:

"No, I thank you, sir, I can't stop tonight."

The stranger beckoned with vehement welcome, and pointed to the vacant space on the seat beside him.

"I thank you for your polite offer," said Bob, "but it's what I'm too late as it is, and haven't time to spare, so I wish you a good night."

The traveller jingled the glass against the neck of the bottle, as if to intimate that he might at least swallow a dram without losing time. Bob was mentally quite of the same opinion; but, though his mouth watered, he remembered his promise, and shaking his head with incorruptible resolution, walked on.

The stranger, pipe in mouth, rose from his bench, the bottle in one hand, and the glass in the other, and followed at the sexton's heels, his dusky horse keeping close in his wake.

There was something suspicious and unaccountable in this importunity.

Bob quickened his pace, but the stranger followed close. The sexton began to feel queer, and turned about. His pursuer was behind, and still inviting him with impatient gestures to taste his liquor.

"I told you before," said Bob, who was both angry and frightened, "that I would not taste it, and that's enough. I don't want to have anything to say to you or your bottle; and in God's name," he added, more vehemently, observing that he was approaching still closer, "fall back and don't be tormenting me this way."

These words, as it seemed, incensed the stranger, for he shook the bottle with violent menace at Bob Martin; but, notwithstanding this gesture of defiance, he suffered the distance between them to increase. Bob, however, beheld him dogging him still in the distance, for his pipe shed a wonderful red glow, which duskily illuminated his entire figure like the lurid atmosphere of a meteor.

"I wish the devil had his own, my boy," muttered the excited sexton, "and I know well enough where you'd be."

The next time he looked over his shoulder, to his dismay he observed the importunate stranger as close as ever upon his track.

"Confound you," cried the man of skulls and shovels, almost beside himself with rage and horror, "what is it you want of me?"

The stranger appeared more confident, and kept wagging his head and extending both glass and bottle toward him as he drew near, and Bob Martin heard the horse snorting as it followed in the dark.

"Keep it to yourself, whatever it is, for there is neither grace nor luck about you," cried Bob Martin, freezing with terror; "leave me alone, will you."

And he fumbled in vain among the seething confusion of his ideas for a prayer or an exorcism. He quickened his pace almost to a run; he was now close to his own door, under the impending bank by the river side.

"Let me in, let me in, for God's sake; Molly, open the door," he cried, as he ran to the threshold, and leant his back against the plank. His pursuer confronted him upon the road; the pipe was no longer in his mouth, but the dusky red glow still lingered round him. He uttered some inarticulate cavernous sounds, which were wolfish and indescribable, while he seemed employed in pouring out a glass from the bottle.

The sexton kicked with all his force against the door, and cried at the same time with a despairing voice.

"In the name of God Almighty, once for all, leave me alone."

His pursuer furiously flung the contents of the bottle at Bob Martin; but instead of fluid it issued out in a stream of flame, which expanded and whirled round them, and for a moment they were both enveloped in a faint blaze; at the same instant a sudden gust whisked off the stranger's hat, and the sexton beheld that his skull was roofless. For an instant he beheld the gaping aperture, black and shattered, and then he fell senseless into his own doorway, which his affrighted wife had just unbarred.

I need hardly give my reader the key to this most intelligible and authentic narrative. The traveller was acknowledged by all to have been the spectre of the suicide, called up by the Evil One to tempt the convivial sexton into a violation of his promise, sealed, as it was, by an imprecation. Had he succeeded, no doubt the dusky steed, which Bob had seen saddled in attendance, was destined to have carried back a double burden to the place from whence he came.

As an attestation of the reality of this visitation, the old thorn tree which overhung the doorway was found in the morning to have been blasted with the infernal fires which had issued from the bottle, just as if a thunderbolt had scorched it.

The moral of the above tale is upon the surface, apparent, and, so to speak, *self-acting* — a circumstance which happily obviates the necessity of our discussing it together. Taking our leave, therefore, of honest Bob Martin, who now sleeps soundly in the same solemn dormitory where, in his day, he made so many beds for others, I come to a legend of the Royal Irish Artillery, whose headquarters were for so long a time in the town of Chapelizod. I don't mean to say that I cannot tell a great many more stories, equally authentic and marvellous, touching this old town; but as I may possibly have to perform a like office for other localities, and as Anthony Poplar is known, like Atropos, to carry a shears, wherewith to snip across all "yarns" which exceed reasonable bounds, I consider it, on the whole, safer to despatch the traditions of Chapelizod with one tale more.

Let me, however, first give it a name; for an author can no more despatch a tale without a title, than an apothecary can deliver his physic without a label. We shall, therefore, call it —

The Spectre Lovers

There lived some fifteen years since in a small and ruinous house, little better than a hovel, an old woman who was reported to have considerably exceeded her eightieth year, and who rejoiced in the name of Alice, or popularly, Ally Moran. Her society was not much courted, for she was neither rich, nor, as the reader may suppose, beautiful. In addition to a lean cur and a cat she had one human companion, her grandson, Peter Brien, whom, with laudable good nature, she had supported from the period of his orphanage down to that of my story, which finds him in his twentieth year. Peter was a goodnatured slob of a fellow, much more addicted to wrestling, dancing, and lovemaking, than to hard work, and fonder of whiskey-punch than good advice. His grandmother had a high opinion of his accomplishments, which indeed was but natural, and also of his genius, for Peter had of late years begun to apply his mind to politics; and as it was plain that he had a mortal hatred of honest labour, his grandmother predicted, like a true fortuneteller, that he was born to marry an heiress, and Peter himself (who had no mind to forego his freedom even on such terms) that he was destined to find a pot of gold. Upon one point both agreed, that being unfitted by the peculiar bias of his genius for work, he was to acquire the immense fortune to which his merits entitled him by means of a pure run of good luck. This solution of Peter's future had the double effect of reconciling both himself and his grandmother to his idle courses, and also of maintaining that even flow of hilarious spirits which made him everywhere welcome, and which was in truth the natural result of his consciousness of approaching affluence.

It happened one night that Peter had enjoyed himself to a very late hour with two or three choice spirits near Palmerstown. They had talked politics and love, sung songs, and told stories, and, above all, had swallowed, in the chastened disguise of punch, at least a pint of good whiskey, every man.

It was considerably past one o'clock when Peter bid his companions goodbye, with a sigh and a hiccough, and lighting his pipe set forth on his solitary homeward way.

The bridge of Chapelizod was pretty nearly the midway point of his night march, and from one cause or another his progress was rather slow, and it was past two o'clock by the time he found himself leaning over its old battlements, and looking up the river, over whose winding current and wooded banks the soft moonlight was falling.

The cold breeze that blew lightly down the stream was grateful to him. It cooled his throbbing head, and he drank it in at his hot lips. The scene, too, had, without his being well sensible of it, a secret fascination. The village was sunk in the profoundest slumber, not a mortal stirring, not a sound afloat, a soft haze covered it all, and the fairy moonlight hovered over the entire landscape.

In a state between rumination and rapture, Peter continued to lean over the battlements of the old bridge, and as he did so he saw, or fancied he saw, emerging one after another along the river bank in the little gardens and enclosures in the rear of the street of Chapelizod, the queerest little whitewashed huts and cabins he had ever seen there before. They had not been there that evening when he passed the bridge on the way to his merry tryst. But the most remarkable thing about it was the odd way in which these quaint little cabins showed themselves. First he saw one or two of them just with the corner of his eye, and when he looked full at them, strange to say, they faded away and disappeared. Then another and another came in view, but all in the same coy way, just appearing and gone again before he could well fix his gaze upon them; in a little while, however, they began to bear a fuller gaze, and he found, as it seemed to himself, that he was able by an effort of attention to fix the vision for a longer and a longer time, and when they waxed faint and nearly vanished, he had the power of recalling them into light and substance, until at last their vacillating indistinctness became less and less, and they assumed a permanent place in the moonlit landscape.

"Be the hokey," said Peter, lost in amazement, and dropping his pipe into the river unconsciously, "them is the quarist bits iv mud cabins I ever seen, growing up like musharoons in the dew of an evening, and poppin' up here and down again there, and

up again in another place, like so many white rabbits in a warren; and there they stand at last as firm and fast as if they were there from the Deluge; bedad it's enough to make a man a'most believe in the fairies."

This latter was a large concession from Peter, who was a bit of a free-thinker, and spoke contemptuously in his ordinary conversation of that class of agencies.

Having treated himself to a long last stare at these mysterious fabrics, Peter prepared to pursue his homeward way; having crossed the bridge and passed the mill, he arrived at the corner of the main-street of the little town, and casting a careless look up the Dublin road, his eye was arrested by a most unexpected spectacle.

This was no other than a column of foot soldiers, marching with perfect regularity towards the village, and headed by an officer on horseback. They were at the far side of the turnpike, which was closed; but much to his perplexity he perceived that they marched on through it without appearing to sustain the least check from that barrier.

On they came at a slow march; and what was most singular in the matter was, that they were drawing several cannons along with them; some held ropes, others spoked the wheels, and others again marched in front of the guns and behind them, with muskets shouldered, giving a stately character of parade and regularity to this, as it seemed to Peter, most unmilitary procedure.

It was owing either to some temporary defect in Peter's vision, or to some illusion attendant upon mist and moonlight, or perhaps to some other cause, that the whole procession had a certain waving and vapoury character which perplexed and tasked his eyes not a little. It was like the pictured pageant of a phantasmagoria reflected upon smoke. It was as if every breath disturbed it; sometimes it was blurred, sometimes obliterated; now here, now there. Sometimes, while the upper part was quite distinct, the legs of the column would nearly fade away or vanish outright, and then again they would come out into clear relief, marching on with measured tread, while the cocked hats and shoulders grew, as it were, transparent, and all but disappeared.

Notwithstanding these strange optical fluctuations, however, the column continued steadily to advance. Peter crossed the street from the corner near the old bridge, running on tip-toe, and with his body stooped to avoid observation, and took up a position upon the raised footpath in the shadow of the houses, where, as the soldiers kept the middle of the road, he calculated that he might, himself undetected, see them distinctly enough as they passed.

"What the div — , what on airth," he muttered, checking the irreligious ejaculation with which he was about to start, for certain queer misgivings were hovering about his heart, notwithstanding the factitious courage of the whiskey bottle. "What on airth is the manin' of all this? is it the French that's landed at last to give us a hand and help us in airmest to this blessed repale? If it is not them, I simply ask who the div — , I mane who on airth are they, for such sogers as them I never seen before in my born days?"

By this time the foremost of them were quite near, and truth to say they were the queerest soldiers he had ever seen in the course of his life. They wore long gaiters and leather breeches, three-cornered hats, bound with silver lace, long blue coats, with scarlet facings and linings, which latter were shewn by a fastening which held together the two opposite corners of the skirt behind; and in front the breasts were in like manner connected at a single point, where and below which they sloped back, disclosing a long-flapped waistcoat of snowy whiteness; they had very large, long cross-belts, and wore enormous pouches of white leather hung extraordinarily low, and on each of which a little silver star was glittering. But what struck him as most grotesque and outlandish in their costume was their extraordinary display of shirt-frill in front, and of ruffle about their wrists, and the strange manner in which their hair was frizzled out and powdered under their hats, and clubbed up into great rolls behind. But one of the party was mounted. He rode a tall white horse, with high action and arching neck; he had a snow-white feather in his three-cornered hat, and his coat was shimmering all over with a profusion of silver lace. From these circumstances Peter concluded that he must be the commander of the detachment, and examined him as he passed attentively. He was a slight, tall man, whose legs did not half fill his leather breeches, and he appeared to be at the wrong side of sixty. He had a shrunk, weather-beaten, mulberry-coloured face, carried a large black patch over one eye, and turned neither to the right nor to the left, but rode on at the head of his men, with a grim, military inflexibility.

The countenances of these soldiers, officers as well as men, seemed all full of trouble, and, so to speak, scared and wild. He watched in vain for a single contented or comely face. They had, one and all, a melancholy and hang-dog look; and as they passed by, Peter fancied that the air grew cold and thrilling.

He had seated himself upon a stone bench, from which, staring with all his might, he gazed upon the grotesque and noiseless procession as it filed by him. Noiseless it was; he could neither hear the jingle of accoutrements, the tread of feet, nor the rumble of the wheels; and when the old colonel turned his horse a little, and made as though he were giving the word of command, and a trumpeter, with a swollen blue nose and white feather fringe round his hat, who was walking beside him, turned about and put his bugle to his lips, still Peter heard nothing, although it was plain the sound had reached the soldiers, for they instantly changed their front to three abreast.

"Botheration!" muttered Peter, "is it deaf I'm growing?"

But that could not be, for he heard the sighing of the breeze and the rush of the neighbouring Liffey plain enough.

"Well," said he, in the same cautious key, "by the piper, this bangs Banagher fairly! It's either the Frinch army that's in it, come to take the town iv Chapelizod by surprise, an' makin' no noise for feard iv wakenin' the inhabitants; or else it's — it's — what it's — somethin' else. But, tundher-an-ouns, what's gone wid Fitzpatrick's shop across the way?"

The brown, dingy stone building at the opposite side of the street looked newer and cleaner than he had been used to see it; the front door of it stood open, and a sentry, in the same grotesque uniform, with shouldered musket, was pacing noiselessly to and fro before it. At the angle of this building, in like manner, a wide gate (of which Peter had no recollection whatever) stood open, before which, also, a similar sentry was gliding, and into this gateway the whole column gradually passed, and Peter finally lost sight of it.

"I'm not asleep; I'm not dhramin'," said he, rubbing his eyes, and stamping slightly on the pavement, to assure himself that he was wide awake. "It is a quare business, whatever it is; an' it's not alone that, but everything about town looks strange to me. There's Tresham's house new painted, bedad, an' them flowers in the windies! An' Delany's house, too, that had not a whole pane of glass in it this morning, and scarce a slate on the roof of it! It is not possible it's what it's dhrunk I am. Sure there's the big tree, and not a leaf of it changed since I passed, and the stars overhead, all right. I don't think it is in my eyes it is."

And so looking about him, and every moment finding or fancying new food for wonder, he walked along the pavement, intending, without further delay, to make his way home.

But his adventures for the night were not concluded. He had nearly reached the angle of the short land that leads up to the church, when for the first time he perceived that an officer, in the uniform he had just seen, was walking before, only a few yards in advance of him.

The officer was walking along at an easy, swinging gait, and carried his sword under his arm, and was looking down on the pavement with an air of reverie.

In the very fact that he seemed unconscious of Peter's presence, and disposed to keep his reflections to himself, there was something reassuring. Besides, the reader must please to remember that our hero had a quantum sufficit of good punch before his adventure commenced, and was thus fortified against those qualms and terrors under which, in a more reasonable state of mind, he might not impossibly have sunk.

The idea of the French invasion revived in full power in Peter's fuddled imagination, as he pursued the nonchalant swagger of the officer.

"Be the powers iv Moll Kelly, I'll ax him what it is," said Peter, with a sudden accession of rashness. "He may tell me or not, as he plases, but he can't be offended, anyhow."

With this reflection having inspired himself, Peter cleared his voice and began —

"Captain!" said he, "I ax your pardon, captain, an' maybe you'd be so condescindin' to my ignorance as to tell me, if it's plasin' to yer honour, whether your honour is not a Frinchman, if it's plasin' to you."

This he asked, not thinking that, had it been as he suspected, not one word of his question in all probability would have been intelligible to the person he addressed. He was, however, understood, for the officer answered him in English, at the same time slackening his pace and moving a little to the side of the pathway, as if to invite his interrogator to take his place beside him.

"No; I am an Irishman," he answered.

"I humbly thank your honour," said Peter, drawing nearer — for the affability and the nativity of the officer encouraged him — "but maybe your honour is in the *sarvice* of the King of France?"

"I serve the same King as you do," he answered, with a sorrowful significance which Peter did not comprehend at the time; and, interrogating in turn, he asked, "But what calls you forth at this hour of the day?"

"The *day*, your honour! — the night, you mane."

"It was always our way to turn night into day, and we keep to it still," remarked the soldier. "But, no matter, come up here to my house; I have a job for you, if you wish to earn some money easily. I live here."

As he said this, he beckoned authoritatively to Peter, who followed almost mechanically at his heels, and they turned up a little lane near the old Roman Catholic chapel, at the end of which stood, in Peter's time, the ruins of a tall, stone-built house.

Like everything else in the town, it had suffered a metamorphosis. The stained and ragged walls were now erect, perfect, and covered with pebble-dash; window-panes glittered coldly in every window; the green hall-door had a bright brass knocker on it. Peter did not know whether to believe his previous or his present impressions; seeing is believing, and Peter could not dispute the reality of the scene. All the records of his memory seemed but the images of a tipsy dream. In a trance of astonishment and perplexity, therefore, he submitted himself to the chances of his adventure.

The door opened, the officer beckoned with a melancholy air of authority to Peter, and entered. Our hero followed him into a sort of hall, which was very dark, but he was guided by the steps of the soldier, and, in silence, they ascended the stairs. The moonlight, which shone in at the lobbies, showed an old, dark wainscoting, and a heavy, oak banister. They passed by closed doors at different landing-places, but all was dark and silent as, indeed, became that late hour of the night.

Now they ascended to the topmost floor. The captain paused for a minute at the nearest door, and, with a heavy groan, pushing it open, entered the room. Peter remained at the threshold. A slight female form in a sort of loose, white robe, and with a great deal of dark hair hanging loosely about her, was standing in the middle of the floor, with her back towards them.

The soldier stopped short before he reached her, and said, in a voice of great anguish, "Still the same, sweet bird — sweet bird! still the same." Whereupon, she turned suddenly, and threw her arms about the neck of the officer, with a gesture of fondness and despair, and her frame was agitated as if by a burst of sobs. He held her close to his breast in silence; and honest Peter felt a strange terror creep over him, as he witnessed these mysterious sorrows and endearments.

"Tonight, tonight — and then ten years more — ten long years — another ten years."

The officer and the lady seemed to speak these words together; her voice mingled with his in a musical and fearful wail, like a distant summer wind, in the dead hour of night, wandering through ruins. Then he heard the officer say, alone, in a voice of anguish —

"Upon me be it all, for ever, sweet birdie, upon me."

And again they seemed to mourn together in the same soft and desolate wail, like sounds of grief heard from a great distance.

Peter was thrilled with horror, but he was also under a strange fascination; and an intense and dreadful curiosity held him fast.

The moon was shining obliquely into the room, and through the window Peter saw the familiar slopes of the Park, sleeping mistily under its shimmer. He could also see the furniture of the room with tolerable distinctness — the old balloon-backed chairs, a four-post bed in a sort of recess, and a rack against the wall, from which hung some military clothes and accoutrements; and the sight of all these homely objects reassured him somewhat, and he could not help feeling unspeakably curious to see the face of the girl whose long hair was streaming over the officer's epaulet.

Peter, accordingly, coughed, at first slightly, and afterward more loudly, to recall her from her reverie of grief; and, apparently, he succeeded; for she turned round, as did her companion, and both, standing hand in hand, gazed upon him fixedly. He thought he had never seen such large, strange eyes in all his life; and their gaze seemed to chill the very air around him, and arrest the pulses of his heart. An eternity of misery and remorse was in the shadowy faces that looked upon him.

If Peter had taken less whisky by a single thimbleful, it is probable that he would have lost heart altogether before these figures, which seemed every moment to assume a more marked and fearful, though hardly definable, contrast to ordinary human

shapes.

"What is it you want with me?" he stammered.

"To bring my lost treasure to the churchyard," replied the lady, in a silvery voice of more than mortal desolation.

The word "treasure" revived the resolution of Peter, although a cold sweat was covering him, and his hair was bristling with horror; he believed, however, that he was on the brink of fortune, if he could but command nerve to brave the interview to its close.

"And where," he gasped, "is it hid — where will I find it?"

They both pointed to the sill of the window, through which the moon was shining at the far end of the room, and the soldier said —

"Under that stone."

Peter drew a long breath, and wiped the cold dew from his face, preparatory to passing to the window, where he expected to secure the reward of his protracted terrors. But looking steadfastly at the window, he saw the faint image of a new-born child sitting upon the sill in the moonlight, with its little arms stretched toward him, and a smile so heavenly as he never beheld before.

At sight of this, strange to say, his heart entirely failed him, he looked on the figures that stood near, and beheld them gazing on the infantine form with a smile so guilty and distorted, that he felt as if he were entering alive among the scenery of hell, and shuddering, he cried in an irrepressible agony of horror —

"I'll have nothing to say with you, and nothing to do with you; I don't know what yez are or what yez want iv me, but let me go this minute, every one of yez, in the name of God."

With these words there came a strange rumbling and sighing about Peter's ears; he lost sight of everything, and felt that peculiar and not unpleasant sensation of falling softly, that sometimes supervenes in sleep, ending in a dull shock. After that he had neither dream nor consciousness till he awakened, chill and stiff, stretched between two piles of old rubbish, among the black and roofless walls of the ruined house.

We need hardly mention that the village had put on its wonted air of neglect and decay, or that Peter looked around him in vain for traces of those novelties which had so puzzled and distracted him upon the previous night.

"Ay, ay," said his grandmother, removing her pipe, as he ended his description of the view from the bridge, "sure enough I remember myself, when I was a slip of a girl, these little white cabins among the gardens by the river side. The artillery sogers that was married, or had not room in the barracks, used to be in them, but they're all gone long ago.

"The Lord be merciful to us!" she resumed, when he had described the military procession, "It's often I seen the regiment marchin' into the town, jist as you saw it last night, acushla. Oh, voch, but it makes my heart sore to think iv them days; they were pleasant times, sure enough; but is not it terrible, avick, to think it's what it was the ghost of the rigiment you seen? The Lord betune us an' harm, for it was nothing else, as sure as I'm sittin' here."

When he mentioned the peculiar physiognomy and figure of the old officer who rode at the head of the regiment —

"That," said the old crone, dogmatically, "was ould Colonel Grimshaw, the Lord presarve us! he's buried in the churchyard iv Chapelizod, and well I remember him, when I was a young thing, an' a cross ould floggin' fellow he was wid the men, an' a devil's boy among the girls — rest his soul!"

"Amen!" said Peter; "it's often I read his tombstone myself; but he's a long time dead."

"Sure, I tell you he died when I was no more nor a slip iv a girl — the Lord betune us and harm!"

"I'm afeard it is what I'm not long for this world myself, afther seeing such a sight as that," said Peter, fearfully.

"Nonsinse, avourneen," retorted his grandmother, indignantly, though she had herself misgivings on the subject; "sure there was Phil Doolan, the ferryman, that seen black Ann Scanlan in his own boat, and what harm ever kem of it?"

Peter proceeded with his narrative, but when he came to the description of the house, in which his adventure had had so sinister a conclusion, the old woman was at fault.

"I know the house and the ould walls well, an' I can remember the time there was a roof on it, and the doors an' windows in it, but it had a bad name about being haunted, but by who, or for what, I forget intirely."

"Did you ever hear was there goold or silver there?" he inquired.

"No, no, avick, don't be thinking about the likes; take a fool's advice, and never go next to near them ugly black walls again the longest day you have to live; an' I'd take my davy, it's what it's the same word the priest himself id be afther sayin' to you if you wor to ax his raverence consarnin' it, for it's plain to be seen it was nothing good you seen there, and there's neither luck nor grace about it."

Peter's adventure made no little noise in the neighbourhood, as the reader may well suppose; and a few evenings after it, being on an errand to old Major Vandeleur, who lived in a snug oldfashioned house, close by the river, under a perfect bower of ancient trees, he was called on to relate the story in the parlour.

The Major was, as I have said, an old man; he was small, lean, and upright, with a mahogany complexion, and a wooden inflexibility of face; he was a man, besides, of few words, and if *he* was old, it follows plainly that his mother was older still. Nobody could guess or tell *how* old, but it was admitted that her own generation had long passed away, and that she had not a competitor left. She had French blood in her veins, and although she did not retain her charms quite so well as Ninon de l'Enclos, she was in full possession of all her mental activity, and talked quite enough for herself and the Major.

"So, Peter," she said, "you have seen the dear, old Royal Irish again in the streets of Chapelizod. Make him a tumbler of punch, Frank; and Peter, sit down, and while you take it let us have the story."

Peter accordingly, seated, near the door, with a tumbler of the nectarian stimulant steaming beside him, proceeded with marvellous courage, considering they had no light but the uncertain glare of the fire, to relate with minute particularity his awful adventure. The old lady listened at first with a smile of goodnatured incredulity; her cross-examination touching the drinking-bout at Palmerstown had been teasing, but as the narrative proceeded she became attentive, and at length absorbed, and once or twice

she uttered ejaculations of pity or awe. When it was over, the old lady looked with a somewhat sad and stern abstraction on the table, patting her cat assiduously meanwhile, and then suddenly looking upon her son, the Major, she said —

“Frank, as sure as I live he has seen the wicked Captain Devereux.”

The Major uttered an inarticulate expression of wonder.

“The house was precisely that he has described. I have told you the story often, as I heard it from your dear grandmother, about the poor young lady he ruined, and the dreadful suspicion about the little baby. *She*, poor thing, died in that house heartbroken, and you know he was shot shortly after in a duel.”

This was the only light that Peter ever received respecting his adventure. It was supposed, however, that he still clung to the hope that treasure of some sort was hidden about the old house, for he was often seen lurking about its walls, and at last his fate overtook him, poor fellow, in the pursuit; for climbing near the summit one day, his holding gave way, and he fell upon the hard uneven ground, fracturing a leg and a rib, and after a short interval died, and he, like the other heroes of these true tales, lies buried in the little churchyard of Chapelizod.

*

THE MYSTERIOUS LODGER

PART I

About the year 1822 I resided in a comfortable and roomy old house, the exact locality of which I need not particularise, further than to say that it was not very far from Old Brompton, in the immediate neighbourhood, or rather continuity (as even my Connemara readers perfectly well know), of the renowned city of London.

Though this house was roomy and comfortable, as I have said, it was not, by any means, a handsome one. It was composed of dark red brick, with small windows, and thick white sashes; a porch, too — none of your flimsy trelliswork, but a solid projection of the same vermilion masonry — surmounted by a leaded balcony, with heavy, half-rotten balustrades, darkened the hall-door with a perennial gloom. The mansion itself stood in a walled enclosure, which had, perhaps, from the date of the erection itself, been devoted to shrubs and flowers. Some of the former had grown there almost to the dignity of trees; and two dark little yews stood at each side of the porch, like swart and inauspicious dwarfs, guarding the entrance of an enchanted castle. Not that my domicile in any respect deserved the comparison: it had no reputation as a haunted house; if it ever had any ghosts, nobody remembered them. Its history was not known to me: it may have witnessed plots, cabals, and forgeries, bloody suicides and cruel murders. It was certainly old enough to have become acquainted with iniquity; a small stone slab, under the balustrade, and over the arch of the porch I mentioned, had the date 1672, and a half-effaced coat of arms, which I might have deciphered any day, had I taken the trouble to get a ladder, but always put it off. All I can say for the house is, that it was well stricken in years, with a certain air of sombre comfort about it; contained a vast number of rooms and closets; and, what was of far greater importance, was got by me a dead bargain.

Its individuality attracted me. I grew fond of it for itself, and for its associations, until other associations of a hateful kind first disturbed, and then destroyed, their charm. I forgave its dull red brick, and pinched white windows, for the sake of the beloved and cheerful faces within: its ugliness was softened by its age; and its sombre evergreens, and mossgrown stone flower-pots, were relieved by the brilliant hues of a thousand gay and graceful flowers that peeped among them, or nodded over the grass.

Within that old house lay my life's treasure! I had a darling little girl of nine, and another little darling — a boy — just four years of age; and dearer, unspeakably, than either — a wife — the prettiest, gayest, best little wife in all London. When I tell you that our income was scarcely £380 a-year, you will perceive that our establishment cannot have been a magnificent one; yet, I do assure you, we were more comfortable than a great many lords, and happier, I dare say, than the whole peerage put together.

This happiness was not, however, what it ought to have been. The reader will understand at once, and save me a world of moralising circumlocution, when he learns, bluntly and nakedly, that, among all my comforts and blessings, I was an infidel.

I had not been without religious training; on the contrary, more than average pains had been bestowed upon my religious instruction from my earliest childhood. My father, a good, plain, country clergyman, had worked hard to make me as good as himself; and had succeeded, at least, in training me in godly habits. He died, however, when I was but twelve years of age; and fate had long before deprived me of the gentle care of a mother. A boarding-school, followed by a college life, where nobody having any very direct interest in realising in my behalf the ancient blessing, that in fulness of time I should "die a good old man," I was left very much to my own devices, which, in truth, were none of the best.

Among these were the study of Voltaire, Tom Paine, Hume, Shelley, and the whole school of infidels, poetical as well as prose. This pursuit, and the all but blasphemous vehemence with which I gave myself up to it, was, perhaps, partly reactionary. A somewhat injudicious austerity and precision had indissolubly associated in my childish days the ideas of restraint and gloom with religion. I bore it a grudge; and so, when I became thus early my own master, I set about paying off, after my own fashion, the old score I owed it. I was besides, like every other young infidel whom it has been my fate to meet, a conceited coxcomb. A smattering of literature, without any real knowledge, and a great assortment of all the cut-and-dry flippancies of the school I had embraced, constituted my intellectual stock in trade. I was, like most of my school of philosophy, very proud of being an unbeliever; and fancied myself, in the complacency of my wretched ignorance, at an immeasurable elevation above the churchgoing, Bible-reading herd, whom I treated with a goodhumoured superciliousness which I thought vastly indulgent.

My wife was an excellent little creature and truly pious. She had married me in the full confidence that my levity was merely put on, and would at once give way before the influence she hoped to exert upon my mind. Poor little thing! she deceived herself. I allowed her, indeed, to do entirely as she pleased; but for myself, I carried my infidelity to the length of an absolute superstition. I made an ostentation of it. I would rather have been in a "hell" than in a church on Sunday; and though I did not prevent my wife's instilling her own principles into the minds of our children, I, in turn, took especial care to deliver mine upon all occasions in their hearing, by which means I trusted to sow the seeds of that unprejudiced scepticism in which I prided myself, at least as early as my good little partner dropped those of her own gentle "superstition" into their infant minds. Had I had my own absurd and impious will in this matter, my children should have had absolutely no religious education whatsoever, and been left wholly unshackled to choose for themselves among all existing systems, infidelity included, precisely as chance, fancy, or interest might hereafter determine.

It is not to be supposed that such a state of things did not afford her great uneasiness. Nevertheless, we were so very fond of one another, and in our humble way enjoyed so many blessings, that we were as entirely happy as any pair can be without the holy influence of religious sympathy.

But the even flow of prosperity which had for so long gladdened my little household was not destined to last for ever. It was ordained that I should experience the bitter truth of more than one of the wise man's proverbs, and first, especially, of that which declares that "he that hateth suretyship is sure." I found myself involved (as how many have been before) by a "d — d goodnatured friend," for more than two hundred pounds. This agreeable intelligence was conveyed to me in an attorney's letter, which, to obviate unpleasant measures, considerably advised my paying the entire amount within just one week of the date of his pleasant epistle. Had I been called upon within that time to produce the Pitt diamond, or to make title to the Buckingham estates, the demand would have been just as easily complied with.

I have no wish to bore my reader further with this little worry — a very serious one to me, however — and it will be enough to mention, that the kindness of a friend extricated me from the clutches of the law by a timely advance, which, however, I was bound to replace within two years. To enable me to fulfill this engagement, my wife and I, after repeated consultations, resolved upon the course which resulted in the odd and unpleasant consequences which form the subject of this narrative.

We resolved to advertise for a lodger, with or without board, &c.; and by resolutely submitting, for a single year, to the economy we had prescribed for ourselves, as well as to the annoyance of a stranger's intrusion, we calculated that at the end of that term we should have liquidated our debt.

Accordingly, without losing time, we composed an advertisement in the most tempting phraseology we could devise, consistently with that economic laconism which the cost per line in the columns of the *Times* newspaper imposes upon the rhetoric of the advertising public.

Somehow we were unlucky; for although we repeated our public notification three times in the course of a fortnight, we had but two applications. The one was from a clergyman in ill health — a man of great ability and zealous piety, whom we both knew by reputation, and who has since been called to his rest. My good little wife was very anxious that we should close with his offer, which was very considerably under what we had fixed upon; and I have no doubt that she was influenced by the hope that his talents and zeal might exert a happy influence upon my stubborn and unbelieving heart. For my part, his religious character displeased me. I did not wish my children's heads to be filled with mythic dogmas — for so I judged the doctrines of our holy faith — and instinctively wished him away. I therefore declined his offer; and I have often since thought not quite so graciously as I ought to have done. The other offer — if so it can be called — was so very inadequate that we could not entertain it.

I was now beginning to grow seriously uneasy — our little project, so far from bringing in the gains on which we had calculated, had put me considerably out of pocket; for, independently of the cost of the advertisement I have mentioned, there were sundry little expenses involved in preparing for the meet reception of our expected inmate, which, under ordinary circumstances, we should not have dreamed of. Matters were in this posture, when an occurrence took place which immediately revived my flagging hopes.

As we had no superfluity of servants, our children were early obliged to acquire habits of independence; and my little girl, then just nine years of age, was frequently consigned with no other care than that of her own good sense, to the companionship of a little band of playmates, pretty similarly circumstanced, with whom it was her wont to play. Having one fine summer afternoon gone out as usual with these little companions, she did not return quite so soon as we had expected her; when she did so, she was out of breath, and excited.

"Oh, papa," she said, "I have seen such a nice old, kind gentleman, and he told me to tell you that he has a particular friend who wants a lodging in a quiet place, and that he thinks your house would suit him exactly, and ever so much more; and, look here, he gave me this."

She opened her hand, and shewed me a sovereign.

"Well, this does look promisingly," I said, my wife and I having first exchanged a smiling glance.

"And what kind of gentleman was he, dear?" inquired she. "Was he well dressed — whom was he like?"

"He was not like any one that I know," she answered; "but he had very nice new clothes on, and he was one of the fattest men I ever saw; and I am sure he is sick, for he looks very pale, and he had a crutch beside him."

"Dear me, how strange!" exclaimed my wife; though, in truth there was nothing very wonderful in the matter. "Go on, child," I said; "let us hear it all out."

"Well, papa, he had such an immense yellow waistcoat! — I never did see such a waistcoat," she resumed; "and he was sitting or leaning, I can't say which, against the bank of the green lane; I suppose to rest himself, for he seems very weak, poor gentleman!"

"And how did you happen to speak to him?" asked my wife.

"When we were passing by, none of us saw him at all but I suppose he heard them talking to me, and saying my name; for he said, 'Fanny — little Fanny — so, that's your name — come here child, I have a question to ask you.'"

"And so you went to him?" I said.

"Yes," she continued, "he beckoned to me, and I did go over to him, but not very near, for I was greatly afraid of him at first."

"Afraid! dear, and why afraid?" asked I.

"I was afraid, because he looked very old, very frightful, and as if he would hurt me."

"What was there so old and frightful about him?" I asked.

She paused and reflected a little, and then said —

"His face was very large and pale, and it was looking upwards: it seemed very angry, I thought, but maybe it was angry from pain; and sometimes one side of it used to twitch and tremble for a minute, and then to grow quite still again; and all the time he was speaking to me, he never looked at me once, but always kept his face and eyes turned upwards; but his voice was very soft, and he called me little Fanny, and gave me this pound to buy toys with; so I was not so frightened in a little time, and then he sent a long message to you, papa, and told me if I forgot it he would beat me; but I knew he was only joking, so that did not frighten me either."

"And what was the message, my girl?" I asked, patting her pretty head with my hand.

"Now, let me remember it all," she said, reflectively; "for he told it to me twice. He asked me if there was a good bedroom at the top of the house, standing by itself — and you know there is, so I told him so; it was exactly the kind of room that he described. And then he said that his friend would pay two hundred pounds a-year for that bedroom, his board and attendance; and he told me to ask you, and have your answer when he should next meet me."

"Two hundred pounds!" ejaculated my poor little wife; "why that is nearly twice as much as we expected."

"But did he say that his friend was sick, or very old; or that he had any servant to be supported also?" I asked.

"Oh! no; he told me that he was quite able to take care of himself, and that he had, I think he called it, an asthma, but nothing else the matter; and that he would give no trouble at all, and that any friend who came to see him, he would see, not in the house,

but only in the garden."

"In the garden!" I echoed, laughing in spite of myself.

"Yes, indeed he said so; and he told me to say that he would pay one hundred pounds when he came here, and the next hundred in six months, and so on," continued she.

"Oh, ho! half-yearly in advance — better and better," said I.

"And he bid me say, too, if you should ask about his character, that he is just as good as the master of the house himself," she added; "and when he said that, he laughed a little."

"Why, if he gives us a hundred pounds in advance," I answered, turning to my wife, "we are safe enough; for he will not find half that value in plate and jewels in the entire household, if he is disposed to rob us. So I see no reason against closing with the offer, should it be seriously meant — do you, dear?"

"Quite the contrary, love," said she. "I think it most desirable — indeed, most *providential*."

"Providential! my dear little bigot!" I repeated, with a smile. "Well, be it so. I call it *lucky* merely; but, perhaps, you are happier in your faith, than I in my philosophy. Yes, you are *grateful* for the chance that I only rejoice at. You receive it as a proof of a divine and tender love — I as an accident. Delusions are often more elevating than truth."

And so saying, I kissed away the saddened cloud that for a moment overcast her face.

"Papa, he bid me be sure to have an answer for him when we meet again," resumed the child. "What shall I say to him when he asks me?"

"Say that we agree to his proposal, my dear — or stay," I said, addressing my wife, "may it not be prudent to reduce what the child says to writing, and accept the offer so? This will prevent misunderstanding, as she may possibly have made some mistake."

My wife agreed, and I wrote a brief note, stating that I was willing to receive an inmate upon the terms recounted by little Fanny, and which I distinctly specified, so that no mistake could possibly arise owing to the vagueness of what lawyers term a parole agreement. This important memorandum I placed in the hands of my little girl, who was to deliver it whenever the old gentleman in the yellow waistcoat should chance to meet her. And all these arrangements completed, I awaited the issue of the affair with as much patience as I could affect. Meanwhile, my wife and I talked it over incessantly; and she, good little soul, almost wore herself to death in settling and unsettling the furniture and decorations of our expected inmate's apartments. Days passed away — days of hopes deferred, tedious and anxious. We were beginning to despond again, when one morning our little girl ran into the breakfast-parlour, more excited even than she had been before, and fresh from a new interview with the gentleman in the yellow waistcoat. She had encountered him suddenly, pretty nearly where she had met him before, and the result was, that he had read the little note I have mentioned, and desired the child to inform me that his friend, *Mr. Smith*, would take possession of the apartments I proposed setting, on the terms agreed between us, that very evening.

"This evening!" exclaimed my wife and I simultaneously — I full of the idea of making a first instalment on the day following; *she*, of the hundred-and-one preparations which still remained to be completed.

"And so Smith is his name! Well, that does not tell us much," said I, "but where did you meet your friend on this occasion, and how long is it since?"

"Near the corner of the wallflower lane (so we indicated one which abounded in these fragrant plants); he was leaning with his back against the old tree you cut my name on, and his crutch was under his arm."

"But how long ago?" I urged.

"Only this moment; I ran home as fast as I could," she replied.

"Why, you little blockhead, you should have told me that at first," I cried, snatching up my hat, and darting away in pursuit of the yellow waistcoat, whose acquaintance I not unnaturally coveted, inasmuch as a man who, for the first time, admits a stranger into his house, on the footing of permanent residence, desires generally to know a little more about him than that his name is Smith.

The place indicated was only, as we say, a step away; and as yellow waistcoat was fat, and used a crutch, I calculated on easily overtaking him. I was, however, disappointed; crutch, waistcoat, and all had disappeared. I climbed to the top of the wall, and from this commanding point of view made a sweeping observation — but in vain. I returned home, cursing my ill-luck, the child's dulness, and the fat old fellow's activity.

I need hardly say that Mr. Smith, in all his aspects, moral, social, physical, and monetary, formed a fruitful and interesting topic of speculation during dinner. How many phantom Smiths, short and long, stout and lean, ill-tempered and well-tempered — rich, respectable, or highly dangerous merchants, spies, forgers, nabobs, swindlers, danced before us, in the endless mazes of fanciful conjecture, during that anxious *tête-à-tête*, which was probably to be interrupted by the arrival of the gentleman himself.

My wife and I puzzled over the problem as people would over the possible *dénouement* of a French novel; and at last, by mutual consent, we came to the conclusion that Smith could, and would turn out to be no other than the goodnatured valetudinarian in the yellow waistcoat himself, a humorist, as was evident enough, and a millionaire, as we unhesitatingly pronounced, who had no immediate relatives, and as I hoped, and my wife "was certain," taken a decided fancy to our little Fanny; I patted the child's head with something akin to pride, as I thought of the magnificent, though remote possibilities, in store for her.

Meanwhile, hour after hour stole away. It was a beautiful autumn evening, and the amber lustre of the declining sun fell softly upon the yews and flowers, and gave an air, half melancholy, half cheerful, to the dark-red brick piers surmounted with their cracked and grass-grown stone urns, and furnished with the light foliage of untended creeping plants. Down the short broad walk leading to this sombre entrance, my eye constantly wandered; but no impatient rattle on the latch, no battering at the gate, indicated the presence of a visited, and the lazy bell hung dumbly among the honey-suckles.

"When will he come? Yellow waistcoat promised *this evening*! It has been evening a good hour and a half, and yet he is not here. When will he come? It will soon be dark — the evening will have passed — will he come at all?"

Such were the uneasy speculations which began to trouble us. Redder and duskier grew the light of the setting sun, till it saddened into the mists of night. Twilight came, and then darkness, and still no arrival, no summons at the gate. I would not

admit even to my wife the excess of my own impatience. I could, however, stand it no longer; so I took my hat and walked to the gate, where I stood by the side of the public road, watching every vehicle and person that approached, in a fever of expectation. Even these, however, began to fail me, and the road grew comparatively quiet and deserted. Having kept guard like a sentinel for more than half an hour, I returned in no very good humour, with the punctuality of an expected inmate — ordered the servant to draw the curtains and secure the hall-door; and so my wife and I sat down to our disconsolate cup of tea. It must have been about ten o'clock, and we were both sitting silently — she working, I looking moodily into a paper — and neither of us any longer entertaining a hope that anything but disappointment would come of the matter, when a sudden tapping, very loud and sustained, upon the window pane, startled us both in an instant from our reveries.

I am not sure whether I mentioned before that the sitting-room we occupied was upon the ground-floor, and the sward came close under the window. I drew the curtains, and opened the shutters with a revived hope; and looking out, saw a very tall thin figure, a good deal wrapped up, standing about a yard before me, and motioning with head and hand impatiently towards the hall-door. Though the night was clear, there was no moon, and therefore I could see no more than the black outline, like that of an *ombre chinoise* figure, signing to me with mop and moe. In a moment I was at the hall-door, candle in hand; the stranger stepped in — his long fingers clutched in the handle of a valise, and a bag which trailed upon the ground behind him.

The light fell full upon him. He wore a long, ill-made, black surtout, buttoned across, and which wrinkled and bagged about his lank figure; his hat was none of the best, and rather broad in the brim; a sort of white woollen muffler enveloped the lower part of his face; a pair of prominent green goggles, fenced round with leather, completely concealed his eyes; and nothing of the genuine man, but a little bit of yellow forehead, and a small transverse segment of equally yellow cheek and nose, encountered the curious gaze of your humble servant.

"You are — I suppose" — I began; for I really was a little doubtful about my man.

"Mr. Smith — the same; be good enough to show me to my bedchamber," interrupted the stranger, brusquely, and in a tone which, spite of the muffler that enveloped his mouth, was sharp and grating enough.

"Ha! — Mr. Smith — so I supposed. I hope you may find everything as comfortable as we desire to make it —"

I was about making a speech, but was cut short by a slight bow, and a decisive gesture of the hand in the direction of the staircase. It was plain that the stranger hated ceremony.

Together, accordingly, we mounted the staircase; he still pulling his luggage after him, and striding lightly up without articulating a word; and on reaching his bedroom, he immediately removed his hat, showing a sinister, black scratch-wig underneath, and then began unrolling the mighty woollen wrapping of his mouth and chin.

"Come," thought I, "we *shall* see something of your face after all."

This something, however, proved to be very little; for under his muffler was a loose cravat, which stood up in front of his chin and upon his mouth, he wore a respirator — an instrument which I had never seen before, and of the use of which I was wholly ignorant.

There was something so excessively odd in the effect of this piece of unknown mechanism upon his mouth, surmounted by the huge goggles which encased his eyes, that I believe I should have laughed outright, were it not for a certain unpleasant and peculiar impressiveness in the *tout ensemble* of the narrow-chested, long-limbed, and cadaverous figure in black. As it was, we stood looking at one another in silence for several seconds.

"Thank you, sir," at last he said, abruptly. "I shan't want anything whatever tonight; if you can only spare me this candle."

I assented; and, becoming more communicative, he added —

"I am, though an invalid, an independent sort of fellow enough. I am a bit of a philosopher; I am my own servant, and, I hope, my own master, too. I rely upon myself in matters of the body and of the mind. I place valets and priests in the same category — fellows who live by our laziness, intellectual or corporeal. I am a Voltaire, without his luxuries — a Robinson Crusoe, without his Bible — an anchorite, without a superstition — in short, my indulgence is asceticism, and my faith infidelity. Therefore, I shan't disturb your servants much with my bell, nor yourselves with my psalmody. You have got a rational lodger, who knows how to attend upon himself."

During this singular address he was drawing off his ill-fitting black gloves, and when he had done so, a banknote, which had been slipped underneath for safety, remained in his hand.

"Punctuality, sir, is one of my poor pleasures," he said; "will you allow me to enjoy it now? Tomorrow you may acknowledge this; I should not rest were you to decline it."

He extended his bony and discoloured fingers, and placed the note in my hand. Oh, Fortune and Plutus! It was a £100 banknote.

"Pray, not one word, my dear sir," he continued, unbending still further; "it is simply done pursuant to agreement. We shall know one another better, I hope, in a little time; you will find me always equally punctual. At present pray give yourself no further trouble; I require nothing more. Good night."

I returned the valediction, closed his door, and groped my way down the stairs. It was not until I had nearly reached the hall, that I recollected that I had omitted to ask our new inmate at what hour he would desire to be called in the morning, and so I groped my way back again. As I reached the lobby on which his chamber opened, I perceived a long line of light issuing from the partially-opened door, within which stood Mr. Smith, the same odd figure I had just left; while along the boards was creeping towards him across the lobby, a great, big-headed, buff-coloured cat. I had never seen this ugly animal before; and it had reached the threshold of his door, arching its back, and rubbing itself on the post, before either appeared conscious of my approach, when, with an angry growl, it sprang into the stranger's room.

"What do you want?" he demanded, sharply, standing in the doorway.

I explained my errand.

"I shall call myself," was his sole reply; and he shut the door with a crash that indicated no very pleasurable emotions.

I cared very little about my lodger's temper. The stealthy rustle of his banknote in my waistcoat pocket was music enough to sweeten the harshest tones of his voice, and to keep alive a cheerful good humour in my heart; and although there was, indisputably, something queer about him, I was, on the whole, very well pleased with my bargain.

The next day our new inmate did not ring his bell until noon. As soon as he had had some breakfast, of which he very sparingly partook, he told the servant that, for the future, he desired that a certain quantity of milk and bread might be left outside his door; and this being done, he would dispense with regular meals. He desired, too, that, on my return, I should be acquainted that he wished to see me in his own room at about nine o'clock; and, meanwhile, he directed that he should be left undisturbed. I found my little wife full of astonishment at Mr. Smith's strange frugality and seclusion, and very curious to learn the object of the interview he had desired with me. At nine o'clock I repaired to his room.

I found him in precisely the costume in which I had left him — the same green goggles — the same muffling of the mouth, except that being now no more than a broadly-folded black silk handkerchief, very loose, and covering even the lower part of the nose, it was obviously intended for the sole purpose of concealment. It was plain I was not to see more of his features than he had chosen to disclose at our first interview. The effect was as if the lower part of his face had some hideous wound or sore. He closed the door with his own hand on my entrance, nodded slightly, and took his seat. I expected him to begin, but he was so long silent that I was at last constrained to address him.

I said, for want of something more to the purpose, that I hoped he had not been tormented by the strange cat the night before.

"What cat?" he asked, abruptly; "what the plague do you mean?"

"Why, I certainly did see a cat go into your room last night," I resumed.

"Hey, and what if you did — though I fancy you dreamed it — I'm not afraid of a cat; are you?" he interrupted, tartly.

At this moment there came a low growling mew from the closet which opened from the room in which we sat.

"Talk of the devil," said I, pointing towards the closet. My companion, without any exact change of expression, looked, I thought, somehow still more sinister and lowering; and I felt for a moment a sort of superstitious misgiving, which made the rest of the sentence die away on my lips.

Perhaps Mr. Smith perceived this, for he said, in a tone calculated to reassure me —

"Well, sir, I think I am bound to tell you that I like my apartments very well; they suit me, and I shall probably be your tenant for much longer than at first you anticipated."

I expressed my gratification.

He then began to talk, something in the strain in which he had spoken of his own peculiarities of habit and thinking upon the previous evening. He disposed of all classes and denominations of superstition with an easy sarcastic slang, which for me was so captivating, that I soon lost all reserve, and found myself listening and suggesting by turns — acquiescent and pleased — sometimes hazarding dissent; but whenever I did, foiled and floored by a few pointed satirical sentences, whose sophistry, for such I must now believe it, confounded me with a rapidity which, were it not for the admiration with which he had insensibly inspired me, would have piqued and irritated my vanity not a little.

While this was going on, from time to time the mewling and growling of a cat within the closet became more and more audible. At last these sounds became so loud, accompanied by scratching at the door, that I paused in the midst of a sentence, and observed —

"There certainly is a cat shut up in the closet?"

"Is there?" he ejaculated, in a surprised tone; "nay, I do not hear it."

He rose abruptly and approached the door; his back was towards me, but I observed he raised the goggles which usually covered his eyes, and looked steadfastly at the closet door. The angry sounds all died away into a low, protracted growl, which again subsided into silence. He continued in the same attitude for some moments, and then returned.

"I do not hear it," he said, as he resumed his place, and taking a book from his capacious pocket, asked me if I had seen it before? I never had, and this surprised me, for I had flattered myself that I knew, at least by name, every work published in England during the last fifty years in favour of that philosophy in which we both delighted. The book, moreover, was an odd one, as both its title and table of contents demonstrated.

While we were discoursing upon these subjects, I became more and more distinctly conscious of a new class of sounds proceeding from the same closet. I plainly heard a measured and heavy tread, accompanied by the tapping of some hard and heavy substance like the end of a staff, pass up and down the floor — first, as it seemed, stealthily, and then more and more unconcealedly. I began to feel very uncomfortable and suspicious. As the noise proceeded, and became more and more unequivocal, Mr. Smith abruptly rose, opened the closet door, just enough to admit his own lath-like person, and steal within the threshold for some seconds. What he did I could not see — I felt conscious he had an associate concealed there; and though my eyes remained fixed on the book, I could not avoid listening for some audible words, or signal of caution. I heard, however, nothing of the kind. Mr. Smith turned back — walked a step or two towards me, and said —

"I fancied I heard a sound from that closet, but there is nothing — nothing — nothing whatever; bring the candle, let us both look."

I obeyed with some little trepidation, for I fully anticipated that I should detect the intruder, of whose presence my own ears had given me, for nearly half an hour, the most unequivocal proofs. We entered the closet together; it contained but a few chairs and a small spider table. At the far end of the room there was a sort of grey woollen cloth upon the floor, and a bundle of something underneath it. I looked jealously at it, and half thought I could trace the outline of a human figure; but, if so, it was perfectly motionless.

"Some of my poor wardrobe," he muttered, as he pointed his lean finger in the direction. "It did not sound like a cat, did it — hey — did it?" he muttered; and without attending to my answer, he went about the apartment, clapping his hands, and crying, "Hish — hish — hish!"

The game, however, whatever it was, did not start. As I entered I had seen, however, a large crutch reposing against the wall in the corner opposite to the door. This was the only article in the room, except that I have mentioned, with which I was not familiar. With the exception of our two selves, there was not a living creature to be seen there; no shadow but ours upon the bare walls; no feet but our own upon the comfortless floor.

I had never before felt so strange and unpleasant a sensation.

"There is nothing unusual in the room but that crutch," I said.

"What crutch, you dolt? I see no crutch," he ejaculated, in a tone of sudden but suppressed fury.

"Why, *that* crutch," I answered (for somehow I neither felt nor resented his rudeness), turning and pointing to the spot where I had seen it. It was gone! — it was neither there nor anywhere else. It must have been an illusion — rather an odd one, to be sure. And yet I could at this moment, with a safe conscience, *swear* that I never saw an object more distinctly than I had seen it but a second before.

My companion was muttering fast to himself as we withdrew; his presence rather scared than reassured me; and I felt something almost amounting to horror, as, holding the candle above his cadaverous and sable figure, he stood at his threshold, while I descended the stairs, and said, in a sort of whisper —

"Why, but that I am, like yourself, a philosopher, I should say that your house is — is — a — ha! ha! ha! — HAUNTED!"

"You look very pale, my love," said my wife, as I entered the drawingroom, where she had been long awaiting my return. "Nothing unpleasant has happened?"

"Nothing, nothing, I assure you. Pale! — *do* I look pale?" I answered. "We are excellent friends, I assure you. So far from having had the smallest disagreement, there is every prospect of our agreeing but too well, as you will say; for I find that he holds all my opinions upon speculative subjects. We have had a great deal of conversation this evening, I assure you; and I never met, I think, so scholarlike and able a man."

"I am sorry for it, dearest," she said, sadly. "The greater his talents, if such be his opinions, the more dangerous a companion is he."

We turned, however, to more cheerful topics, and it was late before we retired to rest. I believe it was pride — perhaps only vanity — but, at all events, some obstructive and stubborn instinct of my nature, which I could not overcome — that prevented my telling my wife the odd occurrences which had disturbed my visit to our guest. I was unable or ashamed to confess that so slight a matter had disturbed me; and, above all, that any accident could possibly have clouded, even for a moment, the frosty clearness of my pure and lofty scepticism with the shadows of superstition.

Almost every day seemed to develop some new eccentricity of our strange guest. His dietary consisted, without any variety or relief, of the monotonous bread and milk with which he started; his bed had not been made for nearly a week; nobody had been admitted into his room since my visit, just described; and he never ventured down stairs, or out of doors, until after nightfall, when he used sometimes to glide swiftly round our little enclosed shrubbery, and at others stand quite motionless, composed, as if in an attitude of deep attention. After employing about an hour in this way, he would return, and steal up stairs to his room, when he would shut himself up, and not be seen again until the next night — or, it might be, the night after that — when, perhaps, he would repeat his odd excursion.

Strange as his habits were, their eccentricity was all upon the side least troublesome to us. He required literally no attendance; and as to his occasional night ramble, even *it* caused not the slightest disturbance of our routine hour for securing the house and locking up the hall-door for the night, inasmuch as he had invariably retired before that hour arrived.

All this stimulated curiosity, and, in no small degree, that of my wife, who, notwithstanding her vigilance and her anxiety to see our strange inmate, had been hitherto foiled by a series of cross accidents. We were sitting together somewhere about ten o'clock at night, when there came a tap at the room-door. We had just been discussing the unaccountable Smith; and I felt a sheepish consciousness that he might be himself at the door, and have possibly even overheard our speculation — some of them anything but complimentary, respecting himself.

"Come in," cried I, with an effort; and the tall form of our lodger glided into the room. My wife was positively frightened, and stood looking at him, as he advanced, with a stare of manifest apprehension, and even recoiled mechanically, and caught my hand.

Sensitiveness, however, was not his fault: he made a kind of stiff nod as I mumbled an introduction; and seating himself unasked, began at once to chat in that odd, offhand, and sneering style, in which he excelled, and which had, as he wielded it, a sort of fascination of which I can pretend to convey no idea.

My wife's alarm subsided, and although she still manifestly felt some sort of misgiving about our visitor, she yet listened to his conversation, and, spite of herself, soon began to enjoy it. He stayed for nearly half an hour. But although he glanced at a great variety of topics, he did not approach the subject of religion. As soon as he was gone, my wife delivered judgment upon him in form. She admitted he was agreeable; but then he was such an unnatural, awful-looking object: there was, besides, something indescribably frightful, she thought, in his manner — the very tone of his voice was strange and hateful; and, on the whole, she felt unutterably relieved at his departure.

A few days after, on my return, I found my poor little wife agitated and dispirited. Mr. Smith had paid her a visit, and brought with him a book, which he stated he had been reading, and which contained some references to the Bible which he begged of her to explain in that profounder and less obvious sense in which they had been cited. This she had endeavoured to do; and affecting to be much gratified by her satisfactory exposition, he had requested her to reconcile some discrepancies which he said had often troubled him when reading the Scriptures. Some of them were quite new to my good little wife; they startled and even horrified her. He pursued this theme, still pretending only to seek for information to quiet his own doubts, while in reality he was sowing in her mind the seeds of the first perturbations that had ever troubled the sources of her peace. He had been with her, she thought, no more than a quarter of an hour; but he had contrived to leave her abundant topics on which to ruminate for days. I found her shocked and horrified at the doubts which this potent Magus had summoned from the pit — doubts which she knew not how to combat, and from the torment of which she could not escape.

"He has made me very miserable with his deceitful questions. I never thought of them before; and, merciful Heaven! I cannot answer them! What am I to do? My serenity is gone; I shall never be happy again."

In truth, she was so very miserable, and, as it seemed to me, so disproportionately excited, that, inconsistent in me as the task would have been, I would gladly have explained away her difficulties, and restored to her mind its wonted confidence and serenity, had I possessed sufficient knowledge for the purpose. I really pitied her, and heartily wished Mr. Smith, for the nonce, at the devil.

I observed after this that my wife's spirits appeared permanently affected. There was a constantly-recurring anxiety, and I thought something was lying still more heavily at her heart than the uncertainties inspired by our lodger.

One evening, as we two were sitting together, after a long silence, she suddenly laid her hand upon my arm, and said — "Oh, Richard, my darling! would to God you could pray for me!"

There was something so agitated, and even terrified, in her manner, that I was absolutely startled. I urged her to disclose whatever preyed upon her mind.

"You can't sympathise with me — you can't help me — you can scarcely compassionate me in my misery! Oh, dearest Richard! Some evil influence has been gaining upon my heart, dulling and destroying my convictions, killing all my holy affections, and — and absolutely transforming me. I look inward upon myself with amazement, with terror — with — oh, God! — with actual despair!"

Saying this, she threw herself on her knees, and wept an agonised flood of tears, with her head reposing in my lap.

Poor little thing, my heart bled for her! But what could I do or say?

All I could suggest was what I really thought, that she was unwell — hysterical — and needed to take better care of her precious self; that her change of feeling was fancied, not real; and that a few days would restore her to her old health and former spirits and serenity.

"And sometimes," she resumed, after I had ended a consolatory discussion, which it was but too manifest had fallen unprofitably upon her ear, "such dreadful, impious thoughts come into my mind, whether I choose it or not; they come, and stay, and return, strive as I may; and I can't pray against them. They are forced upon me with the strength of an independent will; and oh! — horrible — frightful — they blaspheme the character of God himself. They upbraid the Almighty upon his throne, and I can't pray against them; there is something in me now that resists prayer."

There was such a real and fearful anguish in the agitation of my gentle companion, that it shook my very soul within me, even while I was affecting to make light of her confessions. I had never before witnessed a struggle at all like this, and I was awestruck at the spectacle.

At length she became comparatively calm. I did gradually succeed, though very imperfectly, in reassuring her. She strove hard against her depression, and recovered a little of her wonted cheerfulness.

After a while, however, the cloud returned. She grew sad and earnest, though no longer excited; and entreated, or rather implored, of me to grant her one special favour, and this was, to avoid the society of our lodger.

"I never," she said, "could understand till now the instinctive dread with which poor Margaret, in *Faust*, shrinks from the hateful presence of Mephistopheles. I now feel it in myself. The dislike and suspicion I first felt for that man — Smith, or whatever else he may call himself — has grown into literal detestation and terror. I hate him — I am afraid of him — I never knew what anguish of mind was until he entered our doors; and would to God — would to God he were gone."

I reasoned with her — kissed her — laughed at her; but could not dissipate, in the least degree, the intense and preternatural horror with which she had grown to regard the poor philosophic invalid, who was probably, at that moment, poring over some metaphysical book in his solitary bedchamber.

The circumstance I am about to mention will give you some notion of the extreme to which these excited feelings had worked upon her nerves. I was that night suddenly awakened by a piercing scream — I started upright in the bed, and saw my wife standing at the bedside, white as ashes with terror. It was some seconds, so startled was I, before I could find words to ask her the cause of her affright. She caught my wrist in her icy grasp, and climbed, trembling violently, into bed. Notwithstanding my repeated entreaties, she continued for a long time stupified and dumb. At length, however, she told me, that having lain awake for a long time, she felt, on a sudden, that she could pray, and lighting the candle, she had stolen from beside me, and kneeled down for the purpose. She had, however, scarcely assumed the attitude of prayer, when somebody, she said, clutched her arm violently near the wrist, and she heard, at the same instant, some blasphemous menace, the import of which escaped her the moment it was spoken, muttered close in her ear. This terrifying interruption was the cause of the scream which had awakened me; and the condition in which she continued during the remainder of the night confirmed me more than ever in the conviction, that she was suffering under some morbid action of the nervous system.

After this event, which I had no hesitation in attributing to fancy, she became literally afraid to pray, and her misery and dependency increased proportionately.

It was shortly after this that an unusual pressure of business called me into town one evening after office hours. I had left my dear little wife tolerably well, and little Fanny was to be her companion until I returned. She and her little companion occupied the same room in which we sat on the memorable evening which witnessed the arrival of our eccentric guest. Though usually a lively child, it most provokingly happened upon this night that Fanny was heavy and drowsy to excess. Her mamma would have sent her to bed, but that she now literally feared to be left alone; although, however, she could not so far overcome her horror of solitude as to do this, she yet would not persist in combating the poor child's sleepiness.

Accordingly, little Fanny was soon locked in a sound sleep, while her mamma quietly pursued her work beside her. They had been perhaps some ten minutes thus circumstanced, when my wife heard the window softly raised from without — a bony hand parted the curtains, and Mr. Smith leaned into the room.

She was so utterly overpowered at sight of this apparition, that even had it, as she expected, climbed into the room, she told me she could not have uttered a sound, or stirred from the spot where she sat transfixed and petrified.

"Ha, ha!" he said gently, "I hope you'll excuse this, I must admit, very odd intrusion; but I knew I should find you here, and could not resist the opportunity of raising the window just for a moment, to look in upon a little family picture, and say a word to yourself. I understand that you are troubled, because for some cause you cannot say your prayers — because what you call your 'faith' is, so to speak, dead and gone, and also because what *you* consider bad thoughts are constantly recurring to your mind. Now, all that is very silly. If it is really impossible for you to believe and to pray, what are you to infer from that? It is perfectly plain your Christian system can't be a true one — faith and *prayer* it everywhere represents as the conditions of grace, acceptance, and salvation; and yet your Creator will not *permit* you either to believe or pray. The Christian system is, forsooth, a *free* gift, and yet he who formed *you* and *it*, makes it absolutely impossible for you to accept it. *Is* it, I ask you, from your own

experience — is it a free gift? And if your own experience, in which you can't be mistaken, gives its pretensions the lie, why, in the name of common sense, will you persist in believing it? I say it is downright blasphemy to think it has emanated from the Good Spirit — assuming that there is one. It tells you that you must be tormented hereafter in a way only to be made intelligible by the image of eternal fires — pretty strong, we must all allow — unless you comply with certain conditions, which it pretends are so easy that it is a positive pleasure to embrace and perform them; and yet, for the life of you, you can't — physically *can't* — do either. Is this truth and mercy? — or is it swindling and cruelty? Is it the part of the Redeemer, or that of the tyrant, deceiver, and tormentor?"

Up to that moment, my wife had sate breathless and motionless, listening, in the catalepsy of nightmare, to a sort of echo of the vile and impious reasoning which had haunted her for so long. At the last words of the sentence his voice became harsh and thrilling; and his whole manner bespoke a sort of crouching and terrific hatred, the like of which she could not have conceived.

Whatever may have been the cause, she was on a sudden disenchanted. She started to her feet; and, freezing with horror though she was, in a shrill cry of agony commanded him, in the name of God, to depart from her. His whole frame seemed to darken; he drew back silently; the curtains dropped into their places, the window was let down again as stealthily as it had just been raised; and my wife found herself alone in the chamber with our little child, who had been startled from her sleep by her mother's cry of anguish, and with the fearful words, "tempter," "destroyer," "devil," still ringing in her ears, was weeping bitterly, and holding her terrified mother's hand.

There is nothing, I believe, more infectious than that species of nervousness which shows itself in superstitious fears. I began — although I could not bring myself to admit anything the least like it — to partake insensibly, but strongly of the peculiar feelings with which my wife, and indeed my whole household, already regarded the lodger up stairs. The fact was, beside, that the state of my poor wife's mind began to make me seriously uneasy; and, although I was fully sensible of the pecuniary and other advantages attendant upon his stay, they were yet far from outweighing the constant gloom and frequent misery in which the protracted sojourn was involving my once cheerful house. I resolved, therefore, at whatever monetary sacrifice, to put an end to these commotions; and, after several debates with my wife, in which the subject was, as usual, turned in all its possible and impossible bearings, we agreed that, deducting a fair proportion for his five weeks' sojourn, I should return the remainder of his £100, and request immediate possession of his apartments. Like a man suddenly relieved of an insufferable load, and breathing freely once more, I instantly prepared to carry into effect the result of our deliberations.

In pursuance of this resolution, I waited upon Mr. Smith. This time my call was made in the morning, somewhere about nine o'clock. He received me at his door, standing as usual in the stealthy opening which barely admitted his lank person. There he stood, fully equipped with goggles and respirator, and swathed, rather than dressed, in his puckered black garments.

As he did not seem disposed to invite me into his apartment, although I had announced my visit as one of business, I was obliged to open my errand where I stood; and after a great deal of fumbling and muttering, I contrived to place before him distinctly the resolution to which I had come.

"But I can't think of taking back any portion of the sum I have paid you," said he, with a cool, dry emphasis.

"Your reluctance to do so, Mr. Smith, is most handsome, and I assure you, appreciated," I replied. "It is very generous; but, at the same time, it is quite impossible for me to accept what I have no right to take, and I must beg of you not to mention that part of the subject again."

"And why should I take it?" demanded Mr. Smith.

"Because you have paid this hundred pounds for six months, and you are leaving me with nearly five months of the term still unexpired," I replied. "I expect to receive fair play myself, and always give it."

"But who on earth said that I was going away so soon?" pursued Mr. Smith, in the same dry, sarcastic key. "I have not said so — because I really don't intend it; I mean to stay here to the last day of the six months for which I have paid you. I have no notion of vacating my hired lodgings, simply because you say, *go*. I shan't quarrel with you — I never quarrel with anybody. I'm as much your friend as ever; but, without the least wish to disoblige, I can't do this, positively I cannot. Is there anything else?"

I had not anticipated in the least the difficulty which thus encountered and upset our plans. I had so set my heart upon effecting the immediate retirement of our inauspicious inmate, that the disappointment literally stunned me for a moment. I, however, returned to the charge: I urged, and prayed, and almost besought him to give up his apartments, and to leave us. I offered to repay every farthing of the sum he had paid me — reserving nothing on account of the time he had already been with us. I suggested all the disadvantages of the house. I shifted my ground, and told him that my wife wanted the rooms; I pressed his gallantry — his good nature — his economy; in short, I assailed him upon every point — but in vain, he did not even take the trouble of repeating what he had said before — he neither relented, nor showed the least irritation, but simply said —

"I can't do this; here I am, and here I stay until the half-year has expired. You wanted a lodger, and you have got one — the quietest, least troublesome, least expensive person you could have; and though your house, servants, and furniture are none of the best, I don't care for that. I pursue my own poor business and enjoyments here entirely to my satisfaction."

Having thus spoken, he gave me a sort of nod, and closed the door.

So, instead of getting rid of him the next day, as we had hoped, we had nearly five months more of his company in expectancy; I hated, and my wife dreaded the prospect. She was literally miserable and panic-struck at her disappointment — and grew so nervous and wretched that I made up my mind to look out for lodgings for her and the children (subversive of all our schemes of retrenchment as such a step would be), and surrendering the house absolutely to Mr. Smith and the servants during the remainder of his term.

Circumstances, however, occurred to prevent our putting this plan in execution. My wife, meanwhile, was, if possible, more depressed and nervous every day. The servants seemed to sympathise in the dread and gloom which involved ourselves; the very children grew timid and spiritless, without knowing why — and the entire house was pervaded with an atmosphere of uncertainty and fear. A poorhouse or a dungeon would have been cheerful, compared with a dwelling haunted unceasingly with unearthly suspicions and alarms. I would have made any sacrifice short of ruin, to emancipate our household from the odious

mental and moral thralldom which was invisibly established over us — overcasting us with strange anxieties and an undefined terror.

About this time my wife had a dream which troubled her much, although she could not explain its supposed significance satisfactorily by any of the ordinary rules of interpretation in such matters. The vision was as follows.

She dreamed that we were busily employed in carrying out our scheme of removal, and that I came into the parlour where she was making some arrangements, and, with rather an agitated manner, told her that the carriage had come for the children. She thought she went out to the hall, in consequence, holding little Fanny by one hand, and the boy — or, as we still called him, “baby,” — by the other, and feeling, as she did so, an unaccountable gloom, almost amounting to terror, steal over her. The children, too, seemed, she thought, frightened, and disposed to cry.

So close to the hall-door as to exclude the light, stood some kind of vehicle, of which she could see nothing but that its door was wide open, and the interior involved in total darkness. The children, she thought, shrunk back in great trepidation, and she addressed herself to induce them, by persuasion, to enter, telling them that they were only “going to their new home.” So, in a while, little Fanny approached it; but, at the same instant, some person came swiftly up from behind, and, raising the little boy in his hands, said fiercely, “No, the baby first”; and placed him in the carriage. This person was our lodger, Mr. Smith, and was gone as soon as seen. My wife, even in her dream, could not act or speak; but as the child was lifted into the carriage-door, a man, whose face was full of beautiful tenderness and compassion, leaned forward from the carriage and received the little child, which, stretching his arms to the stranger, looked back with a strange smile upon his mother.

“He is safe with me, and I will deliver him to you when you come.”

These words the man spoke, looking upon her, as he received him, and immediately the carriage-door shut, and the noise of its closing wakened my wife from her nightmare.

This dream troubled her very much, and even haunted my mind unpleasantly too. We agreed, however, not to speak of it to anybody, not to divulge any of our misgivings respecting the stranger. We were anxious that neither the children nor the servants should catch the contagion of those fears which had seized upon my poor little wife, and, if truth were spoken, upon myself in some degree also. But this precaution was, I believe, needless, for, as I said before, everybody under the same roof with Mr. Smith was, to a certain extent, affected with the same nervous gloom and apprehension.

And now commences a melancholy chapter in my life. My poor little Fanny was attacked with a cough which soon grew very violent, and after a time degenerated into a sharp attack of inflammation. We were seriously alarmed for her life, and nothing that care and medicine could effect was spared to save it. Her mother was indefatigable, and scarcely left her night or day; and, indeed, for some time, we all but despaired of her recovery.

One night, when she was at the worst, her poor mother, who had sat for many a melancholy hour listening, by her bedside, to those plaintive incoherences of delirium and moanings of fever, which have harrowed so many a fond heart, gained gradually from her very despair the courage which she had so long wanted, and knelt down at the side of her sick darling’s bed to pray for her deliverance.

With clasped hands, in an agony of supplication, she prayed that God would, in his mercy, spare her little child — that, justly as she herself deserved the sorest chastisement his hand could inflict, he would yet deal patiently and tenderly with her in this one thing. She poured out her sorrows before the mercy-seat — she opened her heart, and declared her only hope to be in his pity; without which, she felt that her darling would only leave the bed where she was lying for her grave.

Exactly as she came to this part of her supplication, the child, who had grown, as it seemed, more and more restless, and moaned and muttered with increasing pain and irritation, on a sudden started upright in her bed, and, in a thrilling voice, cried —

“No! no! — the baby first.”

The mysterious sentence which had secretly tormented her for so long, thus piercingly uttered by this delirious, and, perhaps, dying child, with what seemed a preternatural earnestness and strength, arrested her devotions, and froze her with a feeling akin to terror.

“Hush, hush, my darling!” said the poor mother, almost wildly, as she clasped the attenuated frame of the sick child in her arms; “hush, my darling; don’t cry out so loudly — there — there — my own love.”

The child did not appear to see or hear her, but sate up still with feverish cheeks, and bright unsteady eyes, while her dry lips were muttering inaudible words.

“Lie down, my sweet child — lie down, for your own mother,” she said; “if you tire yourself, you can’t grow well, and your poor mother will lose you.”

At these words, the child suddenly cried out again, in precisely the same loud, strong voice — “No! no! the baby first, the baby first” — and immediately afterwards lay down, and fell, for the first time since her illness into a tranquil sleep.

My good little wife sate, crying bitterly by her bedside. The child was better — *that* was, indeed, delightful. But then there was an omen in the words, thus echoed from her dream, which she dared not trust herself to interpret, and which yet had seized, with a grasp of iron, upon every fibre of her brain.

“Oh, Richard,” she cried, as she threw her arms about my neck, “I am terrified at this horrible menace from the unseen world. Oh! poor, darling little baby, I shall lose you — I am sure I shall lose you. Comfort me, darling, and say he is not to die.”

And so I did; and tasked all my powers of argument and persuasion to convince her how unsubstantial was the ground of her anxiety. The little boy was perfectly well, and, even were he to die before his sister that event might not occur for seventy years to come. I could not, however, conceal from myself that there was something odd and unpleasant in the coincidence; and my poor wife had grown so nervous and excitable, that a much less ominous conjecture would have sufficed to alarm her.

Meanwhile, the unaccountable terror which our lodger’s presence inspired continued to increase. One of our maids gave us warning, solely from her dread of our queer inmate, and the strange accessories which haunted him. She said — and this was corroborated by her fellow-servant — that Mr. Smith seemed to have constantly a companion in his room; that although they never heard them speak, they continually and distinctly heard the tread of two persons walking up and down the room together, and described accurately the peculiar sound of a stick or crutch tapping upon the floor, which my own ears had heard. They also had seen the large, ill-conditioned cat I have mentioned, frequently steal in and out of the stranger’s room; and observed that

when our little girl was in greatest danger, the hateful animal was constantly writhing, fawning, and crawling about the door of the sick room after nightfall. They were thoroughly persuaded that this ill-omened beast was the foul fiend himself, and I confess I could not — sceptic as I was — bring myself absolutely to the belief that he was nothing more than a “harmless, necessary cat.” These and similar reports — implicitly believed as they palpably were by those who made them — were certainly little calculated to allay the perturbation and alarm with which our household was filled.

The evenings had by this time shortened very much, and darkness often overtook us before we sate down to our early tea. It happened just at this period of which I have been speaking, after my little girl had begun decidedly to mend, that I was sitting in our dining-parlour, with my little boy fast asleep upon my knees, and thinking of I know not what, my wife having gone up stairs, as usual, to sit in the room with little Fanny. As I thus sate in what was to me, in effect, total solitude, darkness unperceived stole on us.

On a sudden, as I sate, with my elbow leaning upon the table, and my other arm round the sleeping child, I felt, as I thought, a cold current of air faintly blowing upon my forehead. I raised my head, and saw, as nearly as I could calculate, at the far end of the table on which my arm rested, two large green eyes confronting me. I could see no more, but instantly concluded they were those of the abominable cat. Yielding to an impulse of horror and abhorrence, I caught a water-croft that was close to my hand, and threw it full at it with all my force. I must have missed my object, for the shining eyes continued fixed for a second, and then glided still nearer to me, and then a little nearer still. The noise of the glass smashed with so much force upon the table called in the servant, who happened to be passing. She had a candle in her hand, and, perhaps, the light alarmed the odious beast, for as she came in it was gone.

I had had an undefined idea that its approach was somehow connected with a designed injury of some sort to the sleeping child. I could not be mistaken as to the fact that I had plainly seen the two broad, glaring, green eyes. Where the cursed animal had gone I had not observed: it might, indeed, easily have run out at the door as the servant opened it, but neither of us had seen it do so; and we were every one of us in such a state of nervous excitement, that even this incident was something in the catalogue of our ambiguous experiences.

It was a great happiness to see our darling little Fanny every day mending, and now quite out of danger: this was cheering and delightful. It was also something to know that more than two months of our lodger’s term of occupation had already expired; and to realise, as we now could do, by anticipation, the unspeakable relief of his departure.

My wife strove hard to turn our dear child’s recovery to good account for me; but the impressions of fear soon depart, and those of religious gratitude must be preceded by religious faith. All as yet was but as seed strewn upon the rock.

Little Fanny, though recovering rapidly, was still very weak, and her mother usually passed a considerable part of every evening in her bedroom — for the child was sometimes uneasy and restless at night. It happened at this period that, sitting as usual at Fanny’s bedside, she witnessed an occurrence which agitated her not a little.

The child had been, as it seems, growing sleepy, and was lying listlessly, with eyes half open, apparently taking no note of what was passing. Suddenly, however, with an expression of the wildest terror, she drew up her limbs, and cowered in the bed’s head, gazing at some object; which, judging from the motion of her eyes, must have been slowly advancing from the end of the room next the door.

The child made a low shuddering cry, as she grasped her mother’s hand, and, with features white and tense with terror, slowly following with her eyes the noiseless course of some unseen spectre, shrinking more and more fearfully backward every moment.

“What is it? Where? What is it that frightens you, my darling?” asked the poor mother, who, thrilled with horror, looked in vain for the apparition which seemed to have all but bereft the child of reason.

“Stay with me — save me — keep it away — look, look at it — making signs to me — don’t let it hurt me — it is angry — Oh! mamma, save me, save me!”

The child said this, all the time clinging to her with both her hands, in an ecstasy of panic.

“There — there, my darling,” said my poor wife, “don’t be afraid; there’s nothing but me — your own mamma — and little baby in the room; nothing, my darling; nothing indeed.”

“Mamma, mamma, don’t move; don’t go near him”; the child continued wildly. “It’s only his back now; don’t make him turn again; he’s untying his handkerchief. Oh! baby, baby; he’ll *kill* baby! and he’s lifting up those green things from his eyes; don’t you see him doing it? Mamma, mamma, why does he come here? Oh, mamma, poor baby — poor little baby!”

She was looking with a terrified gaze at the little boy’s bed, which lay directly opposite to her own, and in which he was sleeping calmly.

“Hush, hush, my darling child,” said my wife, with difficulty restraining an hysterical burst of tears; “for God’s sake don’t speak so wildly, my own precious love — there, there — don’t be frightened — there, darling, there.”

“Oh! poor baby — poor little darling baby,” the child continued as before; “will no one save him — tell that wicked man to go away — oh — there — why, mamma — don’t — oh, sure you won’t let him — don’t — don’t — he’ll take the child’s life — will you let him lie down that way on the bed — save poor little baby — oh, baby, baby, waken — his head is on your face.”

As she said this she raised her voice to a cry of despairing terror which made the whole room ring again.

This cry, or rather yell, reached my ears as I sate reading in the parlour by myself, and fearing I knew not what, I rushed to the apartment; before I reached it, the sound had subsided into low but violent sobbing; and, just as I arrived at the threshold I heard, close at my feet, a fierce protracted growl, and something rubbing along the surbase. I was in the dark, but, with a feeling of mingled terror and fury, I stamped and struck at the abhorred brute with my feet, but in vain. The next moment I was in the room, and heard little Fanny, through her sobs, cry —

“Oh, poor baby is killed — that wicked man has killed him — he uncovered his face, and put it on him, and lay upon the bed and killed poor baby. I knew he came to kill him. Ah, papa, papa, why did you not come up before he went? — he is gone, he went away as soon as he killed our poor little darling baby.”

I could not conceal my agitation, quite, and I said to my wife —

“Has he, Smith, been here?”

"No."

"What is it, then?"

"The child has seen *some* one."

"Seen whom? Who? Who has been here?"

"I did not see it; but — but I am sure the child saw — that is, *thought* she saw *him*; — the person you have named. Oh, God, in mercy deliver us! What shall I do — what shall I do!"

Thus saying, the dear little woman burst into tears, and crying, as if her heart would break, sobbed out an entreaty that I would look at baby; adding, that she herself had not courage to see whether her darling was sleeping or dead.

"Dead!" I exclaimed. "Tut, tut, my darling; you must not give way to such morbid fancies — he is very well, I see him breathing;" and so saying, I went over to the bed where our little boy was lying. He was slumbering; though it seemed to me very heavily, and his cheeks were flushed.

"Sleeping tranquilly, my darling — tranquilly, and deeply; and with a warm colour in his cheeks," I said, rearranging the coverlet, and retiring to my wife, who sat almost breathless whilst I was looking at our little boy.

"Thank God — thank God," she said quietly; and she wept again; and rising, came to his bedside.

"Yes, yes — alive; thank God; but it seems to me he is breathing very short, and with difficulty, and he looks — *does* he not look hot and feverish? Yes, he *is* very hot; feel his little hand — feel his neck; merciful heaven! he is burning."

It was, indeed, very true, that his skin was unnaturally dry and hot; his little pulse, too, was going at a fearful rate.

"I do think," said I — resolved to conceal the extent of my own apprehensions — "I do think that he is just a *little* feverish; but he has often been much more so; and will, I dare say, in the morning, be perfectly well again. I dare say, but for little Fanny's *dream*, we should not have observed it at all."

"Oh, my darling, my darling, my darling!" sobbed the poor little woman, leaning over the bed, with her hands locked together, and looking the very picture of despair. "Oh, my darling, what has happened to you? I put you into your bed, looking so well and beautiful, this evening, and here you are, stricken with sickness, my own little love. Oh, you will not — you cannot, leave your poor mother!"

It was quite plain that she despaired of the child from the moment we had ascertained that it was unwell. As it happened, her presentiment was but too truly prophetic. The apothecary said the child's ailment was "suppressed smallpox"; the physician pronounced it "typhus." The only certainty about it was the issue — the child died.

To me few things appear so beautiful as a very young child in its shroud. The little innocent face looks so sublimely simple and confiding amongst the cold terrors of death — crimeless, and fearless, that little mortal has passed alone under the shadow, and explored the mystery of dissolution. There is death in its sublimest and purest image — no hatred, no hypocrisy, no suspicion, no care for the morrow ever darkened that little face; death has come lovingly upon it; there is nothing cruel, or harsh, in his victory. The yearnings of love, indeed, cannot be stifled; for the prattle, and smiles, and all the little world of thoughts that were so delightful, are gone for ever. Awe, too, will overcast us in its presence — for we are looking on death; but we do not fear for the little, lonely voyager — for the child has gone, simple and trusting, into the presence of its all-wise Father; and of such, we know, is the kingdom of heaven.

And so we parted from poor little baby. I and his poor old nurse drove in a mourning carriage, in which lay the little coffin, early in the morning, to the churchyard of — . Sore, indeed, was my heart, as I followed that little coffin to the grave! Another burial had just concluded as we entered the churchyard, and the mourners stood in clusters round the grave, into which the sexton was now shovelling the mould.

As I stood, with head uncovered, listening to the sublime and touching service which our ritual prescribes, I found that a gentleman had drawn near also, and was standing at my elbow. I did not turn to look at him until the earth had closed over my darling boy; I then walked a little way apart, that I might be alone, and drying my eyes, sat down upon a tombstone, to let the confusion of my mind subside.

While I was thus lost in a sorrowful reverie, the gentleman who had stood near me at the grave was once more at my side. The face of the stranger, though I could not call it handsome, was very remarkable; its expression was the purest and noblest I could conceive, and it was made very beautiful by a look of such compassion as I never saw before.

"Why do you sorrow as one without hope?" he said, gently.

"I *have* no hope," I answered.

"Nay, I think you have," he answered again; "and I am sure you will soon have more. That little child for which you grieve, has escaped the dangers and miseries of life; its body has perished; but he will receive in the end the crown of life. God has given him an early victory."

I know not what it was in him that rebuked my sullen pride, and humbled and saddened me, as I listened to this man. He was dressed in deep mourning, and looked more serene, noble, and sweet than any I had ever seen. He was young, too, as I have said, and his voice very clear and harmonious. He talked to me for a long time, and I listened to him with involuntary reverence. At last, however, he left me, saying he had often seen me walking into town, about the same hour that he used to go that way, and that if he saw me again he would walk with me, and so we might reason of these things together.

It was late when I returned to my home, now a house of mourning.

PART II

Our home was one of sorrow and of fear. The child's death had stricken us with terror no less than grief. Referring it, as we both tacitly did, to the mysterious and fiendish agency of the abhorred being whom, in an evil hour, we had admitted into our house, we both viewed him with a degree and species of fear for which I can find no name.

I felt that some further calamity was impending. I could not hope that we were to be delivered from the presence of the malignant agent who haunted, rather than inhabited our home, without some additional proofs alike of his malice and his power.

My poor wife's presentiments were still more terrible and overpowering, though not more defined, than my own. She was never tranquil while our little girl was out of her sight; always dreading and expecting some new revelation of the evil influence which, as we were indeed both persuaded, had bereft our darling little boy of life. Against an hostility so unearthly and intangible there was no guarding, and the sense of helplessness intensified the misery of our situation. Tormented with doubts of the very basis of her religion, and recoiling from the ordeal of prayer with the strange horror with which the victim of hydrophobia repels the pure water, she no longer found the consolation which, had sorrow reached her in any other shape, she would have drawn from the healing influence of religion. We were both of us unhappy, dismayed, DEMON-STRICKEN.

Meanwhile, our lodger's habits continued precisely the same. If, indeed, the sounds which came from his apartments were to be trusted, he and his agents were more on the alert than ever. I can convey to you, good reader, no notion, even the faintest, of the dreadful sensation always more or less present to my mind, and sometimes with a reality which thrilled me almost to frenzy — the apprehension that I had admitted into my house the incarnate spirit of the dead or damned, to torment me and my family.

It was some nights after the burial of our dear little baby; we had not gone to bed until late, and I had slept, I suppose, some hours, when I was awakened by my wife, who clung to me with the energy of terror. She said nothing, but grasped and shook me with more than her natural strength. She had crept close to me, and was cowering with her head under the bedclothes.

The room was perfectly dark, as usual, for we burned no night-light; but from the side of the bed next her proceeded a voice as of one sitting there with his head within a foot of the curtains — and, merciful heavens! it was the voice of our lodger.

He was discoursing of the death of our baby, and inveighing, in the old mocking tone of hate and suppressed fury, against the justice, mercy, and goodness of God. He did this with a terrible plausibility of sophistry, and with a resolute emphasis and precision, which seemed to imply, "I have got something to tell you, and, whether you like it or like it not, I *will* say out my say."

To pretend that I felt anger at his intrusion, or emotion of any sort, save the one sense of palsied terror, would be to depart from the truth. I lay, cold and breathless, as if frozen to death — unable to move, unable to utter a cry — with the voice of that demon pouring, in the dark, his undisguised blasphemies and temptations close into my ears. At last the dreadful voice ceased — whether the speaker went or stayed I could not tell — the silence, which he might be improving for the purpose of some hellish strategem, was to me more tremendous even than his speech.

We both lay awake, not daring to move or speak, scarcely even breathing, but clasping one another fast, until at length the welcome light of day streamed into the room through the opening door, as the servant came in to call us. I need not say that our nocturnal visitant had left us.

The magnanimous reader will, perhaps, pronounce that I ought to have pulled on my boots and inexpressibles with all available despatch, run to my lodger's bedroom, and kicked him forthwith downstairs, and the entire way moreover out to the public road, as some compensation for the scandalous affront put upon me and my wife by his impertinent visit. Now, at that time, I had no scruples against what are termed the laws of honour, was by no means deficient in "pluck," and gifted, moreover, with a somewhat excitable temper. Yet, I will honestly avow that, so far from courting a collision with the dreaded stranger, I would have recoiled at his very sight, and given my eyes to avoid him, such was the ascendancy which he had acquired over me, as well as everybody else in my household, in his own quiet, irresistible, hellish way.

The shuddering antipathy which our guest inspired did not rob his infernal homily of its effect. It was not a new or strange thing which he presented to our minds. There was an awful subtlety in the train of his suggestions. All that he had said had floated through my own mind before, without order, indeed, or shew of logic. From my own rebellious heart the same evil thoughts had risen, like pale apparitions hovering and lost in the fumes of a necromancer's cauldron. His was like the summing up of all this — a reflection of my own feelings and fancies — but reduced to an awful order and definiteness, and clothed with a sophisticated form of argument. The effect of it was powerful. It revived and exaggerated these bad emotions — it methodised and justified them — and gave to impulses and impressions, vague and desultory before, something of the compactness of a system.

My misfortune, therefore, did not soften, it exasperated me. I regarded the Great Disposer of events as a persecutor of the human race, who took delight in their miseries. I asked why my innocent child had been smitten down into the grave? — and why my darling wife, whose first object, I knew, had ever been to serve and glorify her Maker, should have been thus tortured and desolated by the cruelest calamity which the malignity of a demon could have devised? I railed and blasphemed, and even in my agony defied God with the impotent rage and desperation of a devil, in his everlasting torment.

In my bitterness, I could not forbear speaking these impenitent repetitions of the language of our nightly visitant, even in the presence of my wife. She heard me with agony, almost with terror. I pitied and loved her too much not to respect even her weaknesses — for so I characterised her humble submission to the chastisements of heaven. But even while I spared her reverential sensitiveness, the spectacle of her patience but enhanced my own gloomy and impenitent rage.

I was walking into town in this evil mood, when I was overtaken by the gentleman whom I had spoken with in the churchyard on the morning when my little boy was buried. I call him *gentleman*, but I could not say *what* was his rank — I never thought about it; there was a grace, a purity, a compassion, and a grandeur of intellect in his countenance, in his language, in his mien, that was beautiful and kinglike. I felt, in his company, a delightful awe, and an humbleness more gratifying than any elation of earthly pride.

He divined my state of feeling, but he said nothing harsh. He did not rebuke, but he reasoned with me — and oh! how mighty was that reasoning — without formality — without effort — as the flower grows and blossoms. Its process was in harmony with the successions of nature — gentle, spontaneous, irresistible.

At last he left me. I was grieved at his departure — I was wonder-stricken. His discourse had made me cry tears at once sweet and bitter; it had sounded depths I knew not of, and my heart was disquieted within me. Yet my trouble was happier than the resentful and defiant calm that had reigned within me before.

When I came home, I told my wife of my having met the same good, wise man I had first seen by the grave of my child. I recounted to her his discourse, and, as I brought it again to mind, my tears flowed afresh, and I was happy while I wept.

I now see that the calamity which bore at first such evil fruit, was good for me. It fixed my mind, however rebelliously, upon God, and it stirred up all the passions of my heart. Levity, inattention, and self-complacency are obstacles harder to be overcome than the violence of evil passions — the transition from hate is easier than from indifference, to love. A mighty change was making on my mind.

I need not particularise the occasions upon which I again met my friend, for so I knew him to be, nor detail the train of reasoning and feeling which in such interviews he followed out; it is enough to say, that he assiduously cultivated the good seed he had sown, and that his benignant teachings took deep root, and flourished in my soul, heretofore so barren.

One evening, having enjoyed on the morning of the same day another of those delightful and convincing conversations, I was returning on foot homeward; and as darkness had nearly closed, and the night threatened cold and fog, the footpaths were nearly deserted.

As I walked on, deeply absorbed in the discourse I had heard on the same morning, a person overtook me, and continued to walk, without much increasing the interval between us, a little in advance of me. There came upon me, at the same moment, an indefinable sinking of the heart, a strange and unaccountable fear. The pleasing topics of my meditations melted away, and gave place to a sense of danger, all the more unpleasant that it was vague and objectless. I looked up. What was that which moved before me? I stared — I faltered; my heart fluttered as if it would choke me, and then stood still. It was the peculiar and unmistakeable form of our lodger.

Exactly as I looked at him, he turned his head, and looked at me over his shoulder. His face was muffled as usual. I cannot have seen its features with any completeness, yet I felt that his look was one of fury. The next instant he was at my side; and my heart quailed within me — my limbs all but refused their office; yet the very emotions of terror, which might have overcome me, acted as a stimulus, and I quickened my pace.

“Hey! what a pious person! So I suppose you have learned at last that ‘evil communications corrupt good manners’; and you are absolutely afraid of the old infidel, the old blasphemer, hey?”

I made him no answer; I was indeed too much agitated to speak.

“You’ll make a good Christian, no doubt,” he continued; “the independent man, who thinks for himself, reasons his way to his principles, and sticks fast to them, is sure to be true to whatever system he embraces. You have been so consistent a philosopher, that I am sure you will make a steady Christian. You’re not the man to be led by the nose by a sophistical mumbler. *You* could never be made the prey of a grasping proselytism; *you* are not the sport of every whiff of doctrine, nor the facile slave of whatever superstition is last buzzed in your ear. No, no: you’ve got a masculine intellect, and think for yourself, hey?”

I was incapable of answering him. I quickened my pace to escape from his detested persecution; but he was close beside me still.

We walked on together thus for a time, during which I heard him muttering fast to himself, like a man under fierce and malignant excitement. We reached, at length, the gateway of my dwelling; and I turned the latchkey in the wicket, and entered the enclosure. As we stood together within, he turned full upon me, and confronting me with an aspect whose character I felt rather than saw, he said —

“And so you mean to be a Christian, after all! Now just reflect how very absurdly you are choosing. Leave the Bible to that class of fanatics who may hope to be saved under its system, and, in the name of common sense, study the Koran, or some less ascetic tome. Don’t be gulled by a plausible slave, who wants nothing more than to multiply *professors* of his theory. Why don’t you *read* the Bible, you miserable, puling poltroon, before you hug it as a treasure? Why don’t you read it, and learn out of the mouth of the founder of Christianity, that there is one sin for which there is *no* forgiveness — blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, hey? — and that sin I myself have heard you commit by the hour — in my presence — in my room. I have heard you commit it in our free discussions a dozen times. The Bible seals against you the lips of mercy. *If it* be true, you are this moment as irrevocably damned as if you had died with those blasphemies on your lips.”

Having thus spoken, he glided into the house. I followed slowly.

His words rang in my ears — I was stunned. What he had said I feared might be true. Giant despair felled me to the earth. He had recalled, and lighted up with a glare from the pit, remembrances with which I knew not how to cope. It was true I had spoken with daring impiety of subjects whose sacredness I now began to appreciate. With trembling hands I opened the Bible. I read and re-read the mysterious doom recorded by the Redeemer himself against blasphemers of the Holy Ghost — monsters set apart from the human race, and damned and dead, even while they live and walk upon the earth. I groaned — I wept. Henceforward the Bible, I thought, must be to me a dreadful record of despair. I dared not read it.

I will not weary you with all my mental agonies. My dear little wife did something toward relieving my mind, but it was reserved for the friend, to whose heavenly society I owed so much, to tranquillise it once more. He talked this time to me longer, and even more earnestly than before. I soon encountered him again. He expounded to me the ways of Providence, and showed me how needful sorrow was for every servant of God. How mercy was disguised in tribulation, and our best happiness came to us, like our children, in tears and wailing. He showed me that trials were sent to call us up, with a voice of preternatural power, from the mortal apathy of sin and the world. And then, again, in our new and better state, to prove our patience and our faith —

“The more trouble befalls you, the nearer is God to you. He visits you in sorrow — and sorrow, as well as joy, is a sign of his presence. If, then, other griefs overtake you, remember this — be patient, be faithful; and bless the name of God.”

I returned home comforted and happy, although I felt assured that some further and sadder trial was before me.

Still our household was overcast by the same insurmountable dread of our tenant. The same strange habits characterised him, and the same unaccountable sounds disquieted us — an atmosphere of death and malice hovered about his door, and we all hated and feared to pass it.

Let me now tell, as well and briefly as I may, the dreadful circumstances of my last great trial. One morning, my wife being about her household affairs, and I on the point of starting for town, I went into the parlour for some letters which I was to take with me. I cannot easily describe my consternation when, on entering the room, I saw our lodger seated near the window, with our darling little girl upon his knee.

His back was toward the door, but I could plainly perceive that the respirator had been removed from his mouth, and that the odious green goggles were raised. He was sitting, as it seemed, absolutely without motion, and his face was advanced close to that of the child.

I stood looking at this group in a state of stupor for some seconds. He was, I suppose, conscious of my presence, for although he did not turn his head, or otherwise take any note of my arrival, he readjusted the muffler which usually covered his mouth, and lowered the clumsy spectacles to their proper place.

The child was sitting upon his knee as motionless as he himself, with a countenance white and rigid as that of a corpse, and from which every trace of meaning, except some vague character of terror, had fled, and staring with a fixed and dilated gaze into his face.

As it seemed, she did not perceive my presence. Her eyes were transfixed and fascinated. She did not even seem to me to breathe. Horror and anguish at last overcame my stupefaction.

“What — what is it?” I cried; “what ails my child, my darling child?”

“I’d be glad to know, myself,” he replied, coolly; “it is certainly something very queer.”

“What is it, darling?” I repeated, frantically, addressing the child.

“What is it?” he reiterated. “Why it’s pretty plain, I should suppose, that the child is ill.”

“Oh merciful God!” I cried, half furious, half terrified — “You have injured her — you have terrified her. Give me my child — give her to me.”

These words I absolutely shouted, and stamped upon the floor in my horrid excitement.

“Pooh, pooh!” he said, with a sort of ugly sneer; “the child is nervous — you’ll make her more so — be quiet and she’ll probably find her tongue presently. I have had her on my knee some minutes, but the sweet bird could not tell what ails her.”

“Let the child go,” I shouted in a voice of thunder; “let her go, I say — let her go.”

He took the passive, deathlike child, and placed her standing by the window, and rising, he simply said —

“As soon as you grow cool, you are welcome to ask me what questions you like. The child is plainly ill. I should not wonder if she had seen something that frightened her.”

Having thus spoken, he passed from the room. I felt as if I spoke, saw, and walked in a horrid dream. I seized the darling child in my arms, and bore her away to her mother.

“What is it — for mercy’s sake what is the matter?” she cried, growing in an instant as pale as the poor child herself.

“I found that — that *demon* — in the parlour with the child on his lap, staring in her face. She is manifestly terrified.”

“Oh! gracious God! she is lost — she is killed,” cried the poor mother, frantically looking into the white, apathetic, meaningless face of the child.

“Fanny, darling Fanny, tell us if you are ill,” I cried, pressing the little girl in terror to my heart.

“Tell your own mother, my darling,” echoed my poor little wife. “Oh! darling, darling child, speak to your poor mother.”

It was all in vain. Still the same dilated, imploring gaze — the same pale face — wild and dumb. We brought her to the open window — we gave her cold water to drink — we sprinkled it in her face. We sent for the apothecary, who lived hard by, and he arrived in a few moments, with a parcel of tranquillising medicines. These, however, were equally unavailing.

Hour after hour passed away. The darling child looked upon us as if she would have given the world to speak to us, or to weep, but she uttered no sound. Now and then she drew a long breath as though preparing to say something, but still she was mute. She often put her hand to her throat, as if there was some pain or obstruction there.

I never can, while I live, lose one line of that mournful and terrible portrait — the face of my stricken child. As hour after hour passed away, without bringing the smallest change or amendment, we grew both alarmed, and at length absolutely terrified for her safety.

We called in a physician toward night, and told him that we had reason to suspect that the child had somehow been frightened, and that in no other way could we at all account for the extraordinary condition in which he found her.

This was a man, I may as well observe, though I do not name him, of the highest eminence in his profession, and one in whose skill, from past personal experience, I had the best possible reasons for implicitly confiding.

He asked a multiplicity of questions, the answers to which seemed to baffle his attempts to arrive at a satisfactory diagnosis. There was something undoubtedly anomalous in the case, and I saw plainly that there were features in it which puzzled and perplexed him not a little.

At length, however, he wrote his prescription, and promised to return at nine o’clock. I remember there was something to be rubbed along her spine, and some medicines beside.

But these remedies were as entirely unavailing as the others. In a state of dismay and distraction we watched by the bed in which, in accordance with the physician’s direction, we had placed her. The absolute changelessness of her condition filled us with despair. The day which had elapsed had not witnessed even a transitory variation in the dreadful character of her seizure. Any change, even a change for the worse, would have been better than this sluggish, hopeless monotony of suffering.

At the appointed hour the physician returned. He appeared disappointed, almost shocked, at the failure of his prescriptions. On feeling her pulse he declared that she must have a little wine. There had been a wonderful prostration of all the vital powers since he had seen her before. He evidently thought the case a strange and precarious one.

She was made to swallow the wine, and her pulse rallied for a time, but soon subsided again. I and the physician were standing by the fire, talking in whispers of the darling child’s symptoms, and likelihood of recovery, when we were arrested in

our conversation by a cry of anguish from the poor mother, who had never left the bedside of her little child, and this cry broke into bitter and convulsive weeping.

The poor little child had, on a sudden, stretched down her little hands and feet, and died. There is no mistaking the features of death: the filmy eye and dropt jaw once seen, are recognised whenever we meet them again. Yet, spite of our belief, we cling to hope; and the distracted mother called on the physician, in accents which might have moved a statue, to say that her darling was not dead, not quite dead — that something might still be done — that it could not be all over. Silently he satisfied himself that no throb of life still fluttered in that little frame.

"It is, indeed, all over," he said, in tones scarce above a whisper; and pressing my hand kindly, he said, "comfort your poor wife"; and so, after a momentary pause, he left the room.

This blow had smitten me with stunning suddenness. I looked at the dead child, and from her to her poor mother. Grief and pity were both swallowed up in transports of fury and detestation with which the presence in my house of the wretch who had wrought all this destruction and misery filled my soul. My heart swelled with ungovernable rage; for a moment my habitual fear of him was neutralised by the vehemence of these passions. I seized a candle in silence, and mounted the stairs. The sight of the accursed cat, flitting across the lobby, and the loneliness of the hour, made me hesitate for an instant. I had, however, gone so far, that shame sustained me. Overcoming a momentary thrill of dismay, and determined to repel and defy the influence that had so long awed me, I knocked sharply at the door, and, almost at the same instant, pushed it open, and entered our lodger's chamber.

He had had no candle in the room, and it was lighted only by the "darkness visible" that entered through the window. The candle which I held very imperfectly illuminated the large apartment; but I saw his spectral form floating, rather than walking, back and forward in front of the windows.

At sight of him, though I hated him more than ever, my instinctive fear returned. He confronted me, and drew nearer and nearer, without speaking. There was something indefinably fearful in the silent attraction which seemed to be drawing him to me. I could not help recoiling, little by little, as he came toward me, and with an effort I said —

"You know why I have come: the child — she's dead!"

"Dead — ha! — *dead* — is she?" he said, in his odious, mocking tone.

"Yes — dead!" I cried, with an excitement which chilled my very marrow with horror; "and *you* have killed her, as you killed my other."

"How? — I killed her! — eh? — ha, ha!" he said, still edging nearer and nearer.

"Yes; I say you!" I shouted, trembling in every joint, but possessed by that unaccountable infatuation which has made men invoke, spite of themselves, their own destruction, and which I was powerless to resist— "deny it as you may, it is you who killed her — wretch! — FIEND! — no wonder she could not stand the breath and glare of HELL!"

"And you are one of those who believe that not a sparrow falls to the ground without your Creator's consent," he said, with icy sarcasm; "and this is a specimen of Christian resignation — hey? You charge his act upon a poor fellow like me, simply that you may cheat the devil, and rave and rebel against the decrees of heaven, under pretence of abusing me. The breath and flare of hell! — eh? You mean that I removed this and these (touching the covering of his mouth and eyes successively) as I *shall* do now again, and show you there's no great harm in that."

There was a tone of menace in his concluding words not to be mistaken.

"Murderer and liar from the beginning, as you are, I defy you!" I shouted, in a frenzy of hate and horror, stamping furiously on the floor.

As I said this, it seemed to me that he darkened and dilated before my eyes. My senses, thoughts, consciousness, grew horribly confused, as if some powerful, extraneous will, were seizing upon the functions of my brain. Whether I were to be mastered by death, or madness, or possession, I knew not; but hideous destruction of some sort was impending: all hung upon the moment, and I cried aloud, in my agony, an adjuration in the name of the three persons of the Trinity, that he should not torment me.

Stunned, bewildered, like a man recovered from a drunken fall, I stood, freezing and breathless, in the same spot, looking into the room, which wore, in my eyes, a strange, unearthly character. Mr. Smith was cowering darkly in the window, and, after a silence, spoke to me in a croaking, sulky tone, which was, however, unusually submissive.

"Don't it strike you as an odd procedure to break into a gentleman's apartment at such an hour, for the purpose of railing at him in the coarsest language? If you have any charge to make against me, do so; I invite inquiry and defy your worst. If you think you can bring home to me the smallest share of blame in this unlucky matter, call the coroner, and let his inquest examine and cross-examine me, and sift the matter — if, indeed, there is anything to *be* sifted — to the bottom. Meanwhile, go you about your business, and leave me to mine. But I see how the wind sits; you want to get rid of me, and so you make the place odious to me. But it won't do; and if you take to making criminal charges against me, you had better look to yourself; for two can play at that game."

There was a suppressed whine in all this, which strangely contrasted with the cool and threatening tone of his previous conversation.

Without answering a word I hurried from the room, and scarcely felt secure, even when once more in the melancholy chamber, where my poor wife was weeping.

Miserable, horrible was the night that followed. The loss of our child was a calamity which we had not dared to think of. It had come, and with a suddenness enough to bereave me of reason. It seemed all unreal, all fantastic. It needed an effort to convince me, minute after minute, that the dreadful truth was so; and the old accustomed feeling that she was still alive, still running from room to room, and the expectation that I should hear her step and her voice, and see her entering at the door, would return. But still the sense of dismay, of having received some stunning, irreparable blow, remained behind; and then came the horrible effort, like that with which one rouses himself from a haunted sleep, the question, "What disaster is this that has befallen?" — answered, alas! but too easily, too terribly! Amidst all this was perpetually rising before my fancy the obscure, dilated figure of our lodger, as he had confronted me in his malign power that night. I dismissed the image with a shudder as

often as it recurred; and even now, at this distance of time, I have felt more than I could well describe in the mere effort to fix my recollection upon its hated traits, while writing the passages I have just concluded.

This hateful scene I did not recount to my poor wife. Its horrors were too fresh upon me. I had not courage to trust myself with the agitating narrative; and so I sate beside her, with her hand locked in mine: I had no comfort to offer but the dear love I bore her.

At last, like a child, she cried herself to sleep — the dull, heavy slumber of worn-out grief. As for me, the agitation of my soul was too fearful and profound for repose. My eye accidentally rested on the holy volume, which lay upon the table open, as I had left it in the morning; and the first words which met my eye were these— “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” This blessed sentence riveted my attention, and shed a stream of solemn joy upon my heart; and so the greater part of that mournful night, I continued to draw comfort and heavenly wisdom from the same inspired source.

Next day brought the odious incident, the visit of the undertaker — the carpentry, upholstery, and millinery of death. Why has not civilisation abolished these repulsive and shocking formalities? What has the poor corpse to do with frills, and pillows, and napkins, and all the equipage in which it rides on its last journey? There is no intrusion so jarring to the decent grief of surviving affection, no conceivable mummery more derisive of mortality.

In the room which we had been so long used to call “the nursery,” now desolate and mute, the unclosed coffin lay, with our darling shrouded in it. Before we went to our rest at night we visited it. In the morning the lid was to close over that sweet face, and I was to see the child laid by her little brother. We looked upon the well-known and loved features, purified in the sublime serenity of death, for a long time, whispering to one another, among our sobs, how sweet and beautiful we thought she looked; and at length, weeping bitterly, we tore ourselves away.

We talked and wept for many hours, and at last, in sheer exhaustion, dropt asleep. My little wife awaked me, and said —

“I think they have come — the — the undertakers.”

It was still dark, so I could not consult my watch; but they were to have arrived early, and as it was winter, and the nights long, the hour of their visit might well have arrived.

“What, darling, is your reason for thinking so?” I asked.

“I am sure I have heard them for some time in the nursery,” she answered.

“Oh! dear, dear little Fanny! Don’t allow them to close the coffin until I have seen my darling once more.”

I got up, and threw some clothes hastily about me. I opened the door and listened. A sound like a muffled knocking reached me from the nursery.

“Yes, my darling!” I said, “I think they have come. I will go and desire them to wait until you have seen her again.”

And, so saying, I hastened from the room.

Our bedchamber lay at the end of a short corridor, opening from the lobby, at the head of the stairs, and the nursery was situated nearly at the end of a corresponding passage, which opened from the same lobby at the opposite side. As I hurried along I distinctly heard the same sounds. The light of dawn had not yet appeared, but there was a strong moonlight shining through the windows. I thought the morning could hardly be so far advanced as we had at first supposed; but still, strangely as it now seems to me, suspecting nothing amiss, I walked on in noiseless, slippered feet, to the nursery-door. It stood half open; some one had unquestionably visited it since we had been there. I stepped forward, and entered. At the threshold horror arrested my advance.

The coffin was placed upon tressles at the further extremity of the chamber, with the foot of it nearly towards the door, and a large window at the side of it admitted the cold lustre of the moon full upon the apparatus of mortality, and the objects immediately about it.

At the foot of the coffin stood the ungainly form of our lodger. He seemed to be intently watching the face of the corpse, and was stooped a little, while with his hands he tapped sharply, from time to time at the sides of the coffin, like one who designs to awaken a slumberer. Perched upon the body of the child, and nuzzling among the grave-clothes, with a strange kind of ecstasy, was the detested brute, the cat I have so often mentioned.

The group thus revealed, I looked upon but for one instant; in the next I shouted, in absolute terror —

“In God’s name! what are you doing?”

Our lodger shuffled away abruptly, as if disconcerted; but the ill-favoured cat, whisking round, stood like a demon sentinel upon the corpse, growling and hissing, with arched back and glaring eyes.

The lodger, turning abruptly toward me, motioned me to one side.

Mechanically I obeyed his gesture, and he hurried hastily from the room.

Sick and dizzy, I returned to my own chamber. I confess I had not nerve to combat the infernal brute, which still held possession of the room, and so I left it undisturbed.

This incident I did not tell to my wife until some time afterwards; and I mention it here because it was, and is, in my mind associated with a painful circumstance which very soon afterwards came to light.

That morning I witnessed the burial of my darling child. Sore and desolate was my heart; but with infinite gratitude to the great controller of all events, I recognised in it a change which nothing but the spirit of all good can effect. The love and fear of God had grown strong within me — in humbleness I bowed to his awful will — with a sincere trust I relied upon the goodness, the wisdom, and the mercy of him who had sent this great affliction. But a further incident connected with this very calamity was to test this trust and patience to the uttermost.

It was still early when I returned, having completed the last sad office. My wife, as I afterwards learned, still lay weeping upon her bed. But somebody awaited my return in the hall, and opened the door, anticipating my knock. This person was our lodger.

I was too much appalled by the sudden presentation of this abhorred spectre even to retreat, as my instinct would have directed, through the open door.

"I have been expecting your return," he said, "with the design of saying something which it might have profited you to learn, but now I apprehend it is too late. What a pity you are so violent and impatient; you would not have heard me, in all probability, this morning. You cannot think how cross-grained and intemperate you have grown since you became a saint — but that is your affair, not mine. You have buried your little daughter this morning. It requires a good deal of that new attribute of yours, *faith*, which judges all things by a rule of contraries, and can never see anything but kindness in the worst afflictions which malignity could devise, to discover benignity and mercy in the torturing calamity which has just punished you and your wife for *nothing*! But I fancy that it will be harder still when I tell you what I more than suspect — ha, ha. It would be really ridiculous, if it were not heartrending; that your little girl has been actually buried *alive*; do you comprehend me? — alive. For, upon my life, I fancy she was not dead as she lay in her coffin."

I knew the wretch was exulting in the fresh anguish he had just inflicted. I know not how it was, but any announcement of *disaster* from his lips, seemed to me to be necessarily true. Half-stifled with the dreadful emotions he had raised, palpitating between hope and terror, I rushed frantically back again, the way I had just come, running as fast as my speed could carry me, toward the, alas! distant burial-ground where my darling lay.

I stopped a cab slowly returning to town, at the corner of the lane, sprang into it, directed the man to drive to the church of —, and promised him anything and everything for despatch. The man seemed amazed; doubtful, perhaps, whether he carried a maniac or a malefactor. Still he took his chance for the promised reward, and galloped his horse, while I, tortured with suspense, yelled my frantic incentives to further speed.

At last, in a space immeasurably short, but which to me was protracted almost beyond endurance, we reached the spot. I halloed to the sexton, who was now employed upon another grave, to follow me. I myself seized a mattock, and in obedience to my incoherent and agonised commands, he worked as he had never worked before. The crumbling mould flew swiftly to the upper soil — deeper and deeper, every moment, grew the narrow grave — at last I sobbed, "Thank God — thank God," as I saw the face of the coffin emerge; a few seconds more and it lay upon the sward beside me, and we both, with the edges of our spades, ripped up the lid.

There was the corpse — but not the tranquil statue I had seen it last. Its knees were both raised, and one of its little hands drawn up and clenched near its throat, as if in a feeble but agonised struggle to force up the superincumbent mass. The eyes, that I had last seen closed, were now open, and the face no longer serenely pale, but livid and distorted.

I had time to see all in an instant; the whole scene reeled and darkened before me, and I swooned away.

When I came to myself, I found that I had been removed to the vestry-room. The open coffin was in the aisle of the church, surrounded by a curious crowd. A medical gentleman had examined the body carefully, and had pronounced life totally extinct. The trepidation and horror I experienced were indescribable. I felt like the murderer of my own child. Desperate as I was of any chance of its life, I dispatched messengers for no less than three of the most eminent physicians then practising in London. All concurred — the child was now as dead as any other, the oldest tenant of the churchyard.

Notwithstanding which, I would not permit the body to be reinterred for several days, until the symptoms of decay became unequivocal, and the most fantastic imagination could no longer cherish a doubt. This, however, I mention only parenthetically, as I hasten to the conclusion of my narrative. The circumstance which I have last described found its way to the public, and caused no small sensation at the time.

I drove part of the way home, and then discharged the cab, and walked the remainder. On my way, with an emotion of ecstasy I cannot describe, I met the good being to whom I owed so much. I ran to meet him, and felt as if I could throw myself at his feet, and kiss the very ground before him. I knew by his heavenly countenance he was come to speak comfort and healing to my heart.

With humbleness and gratitude, I drank in his sage and holy discourse. I need not follow the gracious and delightful exposition of God's revealed will and character with which he cheered and confirmed my faltering spirit. A solemn joy, a peace and trust, streamed on my heart. The wreck and desolation there, lost their bleak and ghastly character, like ruins illuminated by the mellow beams of a solemn summer sunset.

In this conversation, I told him what I had never revealed to any one before — the absolute terror, in all its stupendous and maddening amplitude, with which I regarded our ill-omened lodger, and my agonised anxiety to rid my house of him. My companion answered me —

"I know the person of whom you speak — he designs no good for you or any other. He, too, knows me, and I have intimated to him that he must now leave you, and visit you no more. Be firm and bold, trusting in God, through his Son, like a good soldier, and you will win the victory from a greater and even worse than he — the *unseen* enemy of mankind. You need not see or speak with your evil tenant any more. Call to him from your hall, in the name of the Most Holy, to leave you bodily, with all that appertains to him, this evening. He knows that he must go, and will obey you. But leave the house as soon as may be yourself; you will scarce have peace in it. Your own remembrances will trouble you and *other minds have established associations within its walls and chambers too.*"

These words sounded mysteriously in my ears.

Let me say here, before I bring my reminiscences to a close, a word or two about the house in which these detested scenes occurred, and which I did not long continue to inhabit. What I afterwards learned of it, seemed to supply in part a dim explanation of these words.

In a country village there is no difficulty in accounting for the tenacity with which the sinister character of a haunted tenement cleaves to it. Thin neighbourhoods are favourable to scandal; and in such localities the reputation of a house, like that of a woman, once blown upon, never quite recovers. In huge London, however, it is quite another matter; and, therefore, it was with

some surprise that, five years after I had vacated the house in which the occurrences I have described took place, I learned that a respectable family who had taken it were obliged to give it up, on account of annoyances, for which they could not account, and all proceeding from the apartments formerly occupied by our “lodger.” Among the sounds described were footsteps restlessly traversing the floor of that room, accompanied by the peculiar tapping of the crutch.

I was so anxious about this occurrence, that I contrived to have strict inquiries made into the matter. The result, however, added little to what I had at first learned — except, indeed, that our old friend, the cat, bore a part in the transaction as I suspected; for the servant, who had been placed to sleep in the room, complained that something bounded on and off, and ran to-and-fro along the foot of the bed, in the dark. The same servant, while in the room, in the broad daylight, had heard the sound of walking, and even the rustling of clothes near him, as of people passing and repassing; and, although he had never seen anything, he yet became so terrified that he would not remain in the house, and ultimately, in a short time, left his situation.

These sounds, attention having been called to them, were now incessantly observed — the measured walking up and down the room, the opening and closing of the door, and the teasing tap of the crutch — all these sounds were continually repeated, until at last, worn out, frightened, and worried, its occupants resolved on abandoning the house.

About four years since, having had occasion to visit the capital, I resolved on a ramble by Old Brompton, just to see if the house were still inhabited. I searched for it, however, in vain, and at length, with difficulty, ascertained its site, upon which now stood two small, staring, bran-new brick houses, with each a gay enclosure of flowers. Every trace of our old mansion, and, let us hope, of our “mysterious lodger,” had entirely vanished.

Let me, however, return to my narrative where I left it.

Discoursing upon heavenly matters, my good and gracious friend accompanied me even within the outer gate of my own house. I asked him to come in and rest himself, but he would not; and before he turned to depart, he lifted up his hand, and blessed me and my household.

Having done this, he went away. My eyes followed him till he disappeared, and I turned to the house. My darling wife was standing at the window of the parlour. There was a seraphic smile on her face — pale, pure, and beautiful as death. She was gazing with an humble, heavenly earnestness on us. The parting blessing of the stranger shed a sweet and hallowed influence on my heart. I went into the parlour, to my darling: childless she was now; I had now need to be a tender companion to her.

She raised her arms in a sort of transport, with the same smile of gratitude and purity, and, throwing them round my neck, she said —

“I have seen him — it is he — the man that came with you to the door, and blessed us as he went away — is the same I saw in my dream — the same who took little baby in his arms, and said he would take care of him, and give him safely to me again.”

More than a quarter of a century has glided away since then; other children have been given us by the good God — children who have been, from infancy to maturity, a pride and blessing to us. Sorrows and reverses, too, have occasionally visited us; yet, on the whole, we have been greatly blessed; prosperity has long since ended all the cares of the *res angusta domi*, and expanded our power of doing good to our fellow-creatures. God has given it; and God, we trust, directs its dispensation. In our children, and — would you think it? — our *grand*-children, too, the same beneficent God has given us objects that elicit and return all the delightful affections, and exchange the sweet converse that makes home and family dearer than aught else, save that blessed home where the Christian family shall meet at last.

The dear companion of my early love and sorrows still lives, blessed be Heaven! The evening tints of life have fallen upon her; but the dear remembrance of a first love, that never grew cold, makes her beauty changeless for me. As for your humble servant, he is considerably her senior, and looks it: time has stolen away his raven locks, and given him a *chevelure* of snow instead. But, as I said before, I and my wife love, and, I believe, *admire* one another more than ever; and I have often seen our elder children smile archly at one another, when they thought we did not observe them, thinking, no doubt, how like a pair of lovers we two were.

LAURA SILVER BELL

In the five Northumbrian counties you will scarcely find so bleak, ugly, and yet, in a savage way, so picturesque a moor as Dardale Moss. The moor itself spreads north, south, east, and west, a great undulating sea of black peat and heath.

What we may term its shores are wooded wildly with birch, hazel, and dwarf-oak. No towering mountains surround it, but here and there you have a rocky knoll rising among the trees, and many a wooded promontory of the same pretty, because utterly wild, forest, running out into its dark level.

Habitations are thinly scattered in this barren territory, and a full mile away from the meanest was the stone cottage of Mother Carke.

Let not my southern reader who associates ideas of comfort with the term "cottage" mistake. This thing is built of shingle, with low walls. Its thatch is hollow; the peat-smoke curls stingily from its stunted chimney. It is worthy of its savage surroundings.

The primitive neighbours remark that no rowan-tree grows near, nor holly, nor bracken, and no horseshoe is nailed on the door.

Not far from the birches and hazels that straggle about the rude wall of the little enclosure, on the contrary, they say, you may discover the broom and the rag-wort, in which witches mysteriously delight. But this is perhaps a scandal.

Mall Carke was for many a year the *sage femme* of this wild domain. She has renounced practice, however, for some years; and now, under the rose, she dabbles, it is thought, in the black art, in which she has always been secretly skilled, tells fortunes, practises charms, and in popular esteem is little better than a witch.

Mother Carke has been away to the town of Willarden, to sell knit stockings, and is returning to her rude dwelling by Dardale Moss. To her right, as far away as the eye can reach, the moor stretches. The narrow track she has followed here tops a gentle upland, and at her left a sort of jungle of dwarf-oak and brushwood approaches its edge. The sun is sinking blood-red in the west. His disk has touched the broad black level of the moor, and his parting beams glare athwart the gaunt figure of the old beldame, as she strides homeward stick in hand, and bring into relief the folds of her mantle, which gleam like the draperies of a bronze image in the light of a fire. For a few moments this light floods the air — tree, gorse, rock, and bracken glare; and then it is out, and gray twilight over everything.

All is still and sombre. At this hour the simple traffic of the thinly-peopled country is over, and nothing can be more solitary.

From this jungle, nevertheless, through which the mists of evening are already creeping, she sees a gigantic man approaching her.

In that poor and primitive country robbery is a crime unknown. She, therefore, has no fears for her pound of tea, and pint of gin, and sixteen shillings in silver which she is bringing home in her pocket. But there is something that would have frightened another woman about this man.

He is gaunt, sombre, bony, dirty, and dressed in a black suit which a beggar would hardly care to pick out of the dust.

This ill-looking man nodded to her as he stepped on the road.

"I don't know you," she said.

He nodded again.

"I never sid ye neyaware," she exclaimed sternly.

"Fine evening, Mother Carke," he says, and holds his snuff-box toward her.

She widened the distance between them by a step or so, and said again sternly and pale,

"I hev nowt to say to thee, whoe'er thou beest."

"You know Laura Silver Bell?"

"That's a byneyam; the lass's neyam is Laura Lew," she answered, looking straight before her.

"One name's as good as another for one that was never christened, mother."

"How know ye that?" she asked grimly; for it is a received opinion in that part of the world that the fairies have power over those who have never been baptised.

The stranger turned on her a malignant smile.

"There is a young lord in love with her," the stranger says, "and I'm that lord. Have her at your house tomorrow night at eight o'clock, and you must stick cross pins through the candle, as you have done for many a one before, to bring her lover thither by ten, and her fortune's made. And take this for your trouble."

He extended his long finger and thumb toward her, with a guinea temptingly displayed.

"I have nowt to do wi' thee. I nivver sid thee afoore. Git thee awa'! I earned nea goold o' thee, and I'll tak' nane. Awa' wi' thee, or I'll find ane that will mak' thee!"

The old woman had stopped, and was quivering in every limb as she thus spoke.

He looked very angry. Sulkily he turned away at her words, and strode slowly toward the wood from which he had come; and as he approached it, he seemed to her to grow taller and taller, and stalked into it as high as a tree.

"I conceited there would come something o't", she said to herself. "Farmer Lew must git it done nesht Sunda'. The a'ad awpy!"

Old Farmer Lew was one of that sect who insist that baptism shall be but once administered, and not until the Christian candidate had attained to adult years. The girl had indeed for some time been of an age not only, according to this theory, to be baptised, but if need be to be married.

Her story was a sad little romance. A lady some seventeen years before had come down and paid Farmer Lew for two rooms in his house. She told him that her husband would follow her in a fortnight, and that he was in the mean time delayed by business in Liverpool.

In ten days after her arrival her baby was born, Mall Carke acting as *sage femme* on the occasion; and on the evening of that day the poor young mother died. No husband came; no wedding-ring, they said, was on her finger. About fifty pounds was found in her desk, which Farmer Lew, who was a kind old fellow and had lost his two children, put in bank for the little girl, and resolved to keep her until a rightful owner should step forward to claim her.

They found half-a-dozen love-letters signed "Francis," and calling the dead woman "Laura."

So Farmer Lew called the little girl Laura; and her *sobriquet* of "Silver Bell" was derived from a tiny silver bell, once gilt, which was found among her poor mother's little treasures after her death, and which the child wore on a ribbon round her neck.

Thus, being very pretty and merry, she grew up as a North-country farmer's daughter; and the old man, as she needed more looking after, grew older and less able to take care of her; so she was, in fact, very nearly her own mistress, and did pretty much in all things as she liked.

Old Mall Carke, by some caprice for which no one could account, cherished an affection for the girl, who saw her often, and paid her many a small fee in exchange for the secret indications of the future.

It was too late when Mother Carke reached her home to look for a visit from Laura Silver Bell that day.

About three o'clock next afternoon, Mother Carke was sitting knitting, with her glasses on, outside her door on the stone bench, when she saw the pretty girl mount lightly to the top of the stile at her left under the birch, against the silver stem of which she leaned her slender hand, and called,

"Mall, Mall! Mother Carke, are ye alane all by yersel'?"

"Ay, Laura lass, we can be clooas enoo, if ye want a word wi' me," says the old woman, rising, with a mysterious nod, and beckoning her stiffly with her long fingers.

The girl was, assuredly, pretty enough for a "lord" to fall in love with. Only look at her. A profusion of brown rippling hair, parted low in the middle of her forehead, almost touched her eyebrows, and made the pretty oval of her face, by the breadth of that rich line, more marked. What a pretty little nose! what scarlet lips, and large, dark, long-fringed eyes!

Her face is transparently tinged with those clear Murillo tints which appear in deeper dyes on her wrists and the backs of her hands. These are the beautiful gipsy-tints with which the sun dyes young skins so richly.

The old woman eyes all this, and her pretty figure, so round and slender, and her shapely little feet, cased in the thick shoes that can't hide their comely proportions, as she stands on the top of the stile. But it is with a dark and saturnine aspect.

"Come, lass, what stand ye for atoppa t' wall, whar folk may chance to see thee? I hev a thing to tell thee, lass."

She beckoned her again.

"An' I hev a thing to tell *thee*, Mall."

"Come hidder," said the old woman peremptorily.

"But ye munna gie me the creepin's" (make me tremble). "I winna look again into the glass o' water, mind ye."

The old woman smiled grimly, and changed her tone.

"Now, hunny, git tha down, and let ma see thy canny feyace," and she beckoned her again.

Laura Silver Bell did get down, and stepped lightly toward the door of the old woman's dwelling.

"Tak this," said the girl, unfolding a piece of bacon from her apron, "and I hev a silver sixpence to gie thee, when I'm gaen away heyam."

They entered the dark kitchen of the cottage, and the old woman stood by the door, lest their conference should be lighted on by surprise.

"Afoore ye begin," said Mother Carke (I soften her patois), "I mun tell ye there's ill folk watchin' ye. What's auld Farmer Lew about, he doesna get t' sir" (the clergyman) "to baptise thee? If he lets Sunda' next pass, I'm afeared ye'll never be sprinkled nor signed wi' cross, while there's a sky aboon us."

"Agoy!" exclaims the girl, "who's lookin' after me?"

"A big black fella, as high as the kipples, came out o' the wood near Deadman's Grike, just after the sun gaed down yester e'en; I knew weel what he was, for his feet ne'er touched the road while he made as if he walked beside me. And he wanted to gie me snuff first, and I wouldna hev that; and then he offered me a gowden guinea, but I was no sic awpy, and to bring you here tonight, and cross the candle wi' pins, to call your lover in. And he said he's a great lord, and in luv' wi' thee."

"And you refused him?"

"Well for thee I did, lass," says Mother Carke.

"Why, it's every word true!" cries the girl vehemently, starting to her feet, for she had seated herself on the great oak chest.

"True, lass? Come, say what ye mean," demanded Mall Carke, with a dark and searching gaze.

"Last night I was coming heyam from the wake, wi' auld farmer Dykes and his wife and his daughter Nell, and when we came to the stile, I bid them goodnight, and we parted."

"And ye came by the path alone in the night-time, did ye?" exclaimed old Mall Carke sternly.

"I wasna afeared, I don't know why; the path heyam leads down by the wa's o' auld Hawarth Castle."

"I knaa it weel, and a dowly path it is; ye'll keep indoors o' nights for a while, or ye'll rue it. What saw ye?"

"No freetin, mother; nowt I was feared on."

"Ye heard a voice callin' yer neyame?"

"I heard nowt that was dow, but the hullyhoo in the auld castle wa's," answered the pretty girl. "I heard nor sid nowt that's dow, but mickle that's conny and gladsome. I heard singin' and laughin' a long way off, I consaited; and I stopped a bit to listen. Then I walked on a step or two, and there, sure enough in the Pie-Mag field, under the castle wa's, not twenty steps away, I sid a grand company; silks and satins, and men wi' velvet coats, wi' gowd-lace striped over them, and ladies wi' necklaces that would dazzle ye, and fans as big as griddles; and powdered footmen, like what the shirra hed behind his coach, only these was ten times as grand."

"It was full moon last night," said the old woman.

"Sa bright 'twould blind ye to look at it," said the girl.

"Never an ill sight but the deaul finds a light," quoth the old woman. "There's a rinnin brook thar — you were at this side, and they at that; did they try to mak ye cross over?"

"Agoy! didn't they? Nowt but civility and kindness, though. But ye mun let me tell it my own way. They was talkin' and laughin', and eatin', and drinkin' out o' long glasses and goud cups, seated on the grass, and music was playin'; and I keekin' behind a bush at all the grand doin's; and up they gits to dance; and says a tall fella I didna see afoore, 'Ye mun step across, and dance wi' a young lord that's faan in luv wi' thee, and that's mysel', and sure enow I keeked at him under my lashes and a conny lad he is, to my teyaste, though he be dressed in black, wi' sword and sash, velvet twice as fine as they sells in the shop at Gouden Friars; and keekin' at me again fra the corners o' his een. And the same fella telt me he was mad in luv wi' me, and his fadder was there, and his sister, and they came all the way from Catstean Castle to see me that night; and that's t' other side o' Gouden Friars."

"Come, lass, yer no mafflin; tell me true. What was he like? Was his feyace grimed wi' sut? a tall fella wi' wide shouthers, and lukt like an ill-thing, wi' black clothes amaist in rags?"

"His feyace was long, but weel-faured, and darker nor a gipsy; and his clothes were black and grand, and made o' velvet, and he said he was the young lord himsel'; and he lukt like it."

"That will be the same fella I sid at Deadman's Grike," said Mall Carke, with an anxious frown.

"Hoot, mudder! how cud that be?" cried the lass, with a toss of her pretty head and a smile of scorn. But the fortuneteller made no answer, and the girl went on with her story.

"When they began to dance," continued Laura Silver Bell, "he urged me again, but I wudna step o'er; 'twas partly pride, coz I wasna dressed fine enough, and partly contrairiness, or something, but gaa I wudna, not a fut. No but I more nor half wished it a' the time."

"Weel for thee thou dudstna cross the brook."

"Hoitytoity, why not?"

"Keep at heyame after nightfall, and don't ye be walking by yersel' by daylight or any light lang lonesome ways, till after ye're baptised," said Mall Carke.

"I'm like to be married first."

"Tak care *that* marriage won't hang i' the bell-ropes," said Mother Carke.

"Leave me alane for that. The young lord said he was maist daft wi' luv o' me. He wanted to gie me a conny ring wi' a beautiful stone in it. But, drat it, I was sic an awpy I wudna tak it, and he a young lord!"

"Lord, indeed! are ye daft or dreamin'? Those fine folk, what were they? I'll tell ye. Dobies and fairies; and if ye don't du as yer bid, they'll tak ye, and ye'll never git out o' their hands again while grass grows," said the old woman grimly.

"Od wite it!" replies the girl impatiently, "who's daft or dreamin' noo? I'd a bin dead wi' fear, if 'twas any such thing. It cudna be; all was sa luvesome, and bonny, and shaply."

"Weel, and what do ye want o' me, lass?" asked the old woman sharply.

"I want to know — here's t' sixpence — what I sud du," said the young lass. "'Twud be a pity to lose such a marrow, hey?"

"Say yer prayers, lass; I can't help ye," says the old woman darkly. "If ye gaa wi' *the* people, ye'll never come back. Ye munna talk wi' them, nor eat wi' them, nor drink wi' them, nor tak a pin's-worth by way o' gift fra them — mark weel what I say — or ye're *lost*!"

The girl looked down, plainly much vexed.

The old woman stared at her with a mysterious frown steadily, for a few seconds.

"Tell me, lass, and tell me true, are ye in luv wi' that lad?"

"What for sud I?" said the girl with a careless toss of her head, and blushing up to her very temples.

"I see how it is," said the old woman, with a groan, and repeated the words, sadly thinking; and walked out of the door a step or two, and looked jealously round. "The lass is witched, the lass is witched!"

"Did ye see him since?" asked Mother Carke, returning.

The girl was still embarrassed; and now she spoke in a lower tone, and seemed subdued.

"I thought I sid him as I came here, walkin' beside me among the trees; but I consait it was only the trees themsels that lukt like rinnin' one behind another, as I walked on."

"I can tell thee nowt, lass, but what I telt ye afoore," answered the old woman peremptorily. "Get ye heyame, and don't delay on the way; and say yer prayers as ye gaa; and let none but good thoughts come nigh ye; and put nayer foot outside the doorsteyan again till ye gaa to be christened; and get that done a Sunda' next."

And with this charge, given with grizzly earnestness, she saw her over the stile, and stood upon it watching her retreat, until the trees quite hid her and her path from view.

The sky grew cloudy and thunderous, and the air darkened rapidly, as the girl, a little frightened by Mall Carke's view of the case, walked homeward by the lonely path among the trees.

A black cat, which had walked close by her — for these creatures sometimes take a ramble in search of their prey among the woods and thickets — crept from under the hollow of an oak, and was again with her. It seemed to her to grow bigger and bigger as the darkness deepened, and its green eyes glared as large as halfpennies in her affrighted vision as the thunder came booming along the heights from the Willarden-road.

She tried to drive it away; but it growled and hissed awfully, and set up its back as if it would spring at her, and finally it skipped up into a tree, where they grew thickest at each side of her path, and accompanied her, high over head, hopping from bough to bough as if meditating a pounce upon her shoulders. Her fancy being full of strange thoughts, she was frightened, and she fancied that it was haunting her steps, and destined to undergo some hideous transformation, the moment she ceased to guard her path with prayers.

She was frightened for a while after she got home. The dark looks of Mother Carke were always before her eyes, and a secret dread prevented her passing the threshold of her home again that night.

Next day it was different. She had got rid of the awe with which Mother Carke had inspired her. She could not get the tall dark-featured lord, in the black velvet dress, out of her head. He had "taken her fancy"; she was growing to love him. She could think of nothing else.

Bessie Hennock, a neighbour's daughter, came to see her that day, and proposed a walk toward the ruins of Hawarth Castle, to gather "blaeberries." So off the two girls went together.

In the thicket, along the slopes near the ivied walls of Hawarth Castle, the companions began to fill their baskets. Hours passed. The sun was sinking near the west, and Laura Silver Bell had not come home.

Over the hatch of the farmhouse door the maids leant ever and anon with outstretched necks, watching for a sign of the girl's return, and wondering, as the shadows lengthened, what had become of her.

At last, just as the rosy sunset gilding began to overspread the landscape, Bessie Hennock, weeping into her apron, made her appearance without her companion.

Her account of their adventures was curious.

I will relate the substance of it more connectedly than her agitation would allow her to give it, and without the disguise of the rude Northumbrian dialect.

The girl said, that, as they got along together among the brambles that grow beside the brook that bounds the Pie-Mag field, she on a sudden saw a very tall big-boned man, with an ill-favoured smirched face, and dressed in worn and rusty black, standing at the other side of a little stream. She was frightened; and while looking at this dirty, wicked, starved figure, Laura Silver Bell touched her, gazing at the same tall scarecrow, but with a countenance full of confusion and even rapture. She was peeping through the bush behind which she stood, and with a sigh she said:

"Is na that a conny lad? Agoy! See his bonny velvet clothes, his sword and sash; that's a lord, I can tell ye; and weel I know who he follows, who he luv'es, and who he'll wed."

Bessie Hennock thought her companion daft.

"See how luv'esome he luks!" whispered Laura.

Bessie looked again, and saw him gazing at her companion with a malignant smile, and at the same time he beckoned her to approach.

"Darrat ta! gaa not near him! he'll wring thy neck!" gasped Bessie in great fear, as she saw Laura step forward with a look of beautiful bashfulness and joy.

She took the hand he stretched across the stream, more for love of the hand than any need of help, and in a moment was across and by his side, and his long arm about her waist.

"Fares te weel, Bessie, I'm gain my ways," she called, leaning her head to his shoulder; "and tell gud Fadder Lew I'm gain my ways to be happy, and may be, at lang last, I'll see him again."

And with a farewell wave of her hand, she went away with her dismal partner; and Laura Silver Bell was never more seen at home, or among the "coppies" and "wickwoods," the bonny fields and bosky hollows, by Dardale Moss.

Bessie Hennock followed them for a time.

She crossed the brook, and though they seemed to move slowly enough, she was obliged to run to keep them in view; and she all the time cried to her continually, "Come back, come back, bonnie Laurie!" until, getting over a bank, she was met by a white-faced old man, and so frightened was she, that she thought she fainted outright. At all events, she did not come to herself until the birds were singing their vespers in the amber light of sunset, and the day was over.

No trace of the direction of the girl's flight was ever discovered. Weeks and months passed, and more than a year.

At the end of that time, one of Mall Carke's goats died, as she suspected, by the envious practices of a rival witch who lived at the far end of Dardale Moss.

All alone in her stone cabin the old woman had prepared her charm to ascertain the author of her misfortune.

The heart of the dead animal, stuck all over with pins, was burnt in the fire; the windows, doors, and every other aperture of the house being first carefully stopped. After the heart, thus prepared with suitable incantations, is consumed in the fire, the first person who comes to the door or passes by it is the offending magician.

Mother Carke completed these lonely rites at dead of night. It was a dark night, with the glimmer of the stars only, and a melancholy night-wind was sighing through the scattered woods that spread around.

After a long and dead silence, there came a heavy thump at the door, and a deep voice called her by name.

She was startled, for she expected no man's voice; and peeping from the window, she saw, in the dim light, a coach and four horses, with gold-laced footmen, and coachman in wig and cocked hat, turned out as if for a state occasion.

She unbarred the door; and a tall gentleman, dressed in black, waiting at the threshold, entreated her, as the only *sage femme* within reach, to come in the coach and attend Lady Lairdale, who was about to give birth to a baby, promising her handsome payment.

Lady Lairdale! She had never heard of her.

"How far away is it?"

"Twelve miles on the old road to Golden Friars."

Her avarice is roused, and she steps into the coach. The footman claps to the door; the glass jingles with the sound of a laugh. The tall dark-faced gentleman in black is seated opposite; they are driving at a furious pace; they have turned out of the road into a narrower one, dark with thicker and loftier forest than she was accustomed to. She grows anxious; for she knows every road and by-path in the country round, and she has never seen this one.

He encourages her. The moon has risen above the edge of the horizon, and she sees a noble old castle. Its summit of tower, watchtower and battlement, glimmers faintly in the moonlight. This is their destination.

She feels on a sudden all but overpowered by sleep; but although she nods, she is quite conscious of the continued motion, which has become even rougher.

She makes an effort, and rouses herself. What has become of the coach, the castle, the servants? Nothing but the strange forest remains the same.

She is jolting along on a rude hurdle, seated on rushes, and a tall, big-boned man, in rags, sits in front, kicking with his heel the ill-favoured beast that pulls them along, every bone of which sticks out, and holding the halter which serves for reins. They stop at the door of a miserable building of loose stone, with a thatch so sunk and rotten, that the roof-tree and couples protrude in crooked corners, like the bones of the wretched horse, with enormous head and ears, that dragged them to the door.

The long gaunt man gets down, his sinister face grimed like his hands.

It was the same grimy giant who had accosted her on the lonely road near Deadman's Grike. But she feels that she "must go through with it" now, and she follows him into the house.

Two rushlights were burning in the large and miserable room, and on a coarse ragged bed lay a woman groaning piteously.

"That's Lady Lairdale," says the gaunt dark man, who then began to stride up and down the room rolling his head, stamping furiously, and thumping one hand on the palm of the other, and talking and laughing in the corners, where there was no one visible to hear or to answer.

Old Mall Carke recognized in the faded half-starved creature who lay on the bed, as dark now and grimy as the man, and looking as if she had never in her life washed hands or face, the once blithe and pretty Laura Lew.

The hideous being who was her mate continued in the same odd fluctuations of fury, grief, and merriment; and whenever she uttered a groan, he parodied it with another, as Mother Carke thought, in saturnine derision.

At length he strode into another room, and banged the door after him.

In due time the poor woman's pains were over, and a daughter was born.

Such an imp! with long pointed ears, flat nose, and enormous restless eyes and mouth. It instantly began to yell and talk in some unknown language, at the noise of which the father looked into the room, and told the *sage femme* that she should not go unrewarded.

The sick woman seized the moment of his absence to say in the ear of Mall Carke:

"If ye had not been at ill work tonight, he could not hev fetched ye. Tak no more now than your rightful fee, or he'll keep ye here."

At this moment he returned with a bag of gold and silver coins, which he emptied on the table, and told her to help herself.

She took four shillings, which was her primitive fee, neither more nor less; and all his urgency could not prevail with her to take a farthing more. He looked so terrible at her refusal, that she rushed out of the house.

He ran after her.

"You'll take your money with you," he roared, snatching up the bag, still half full, and flung it after her.

It lighted on her shoulder; and partly from the blow, partly from terror, she fell to the ground; and when she came to herself, it was morning, and she was lying across her own door-stone.

It is said that she never more told fortune or practised spell. And though all that happened sixty years ago and more, Laura Silver Bell, wise folk think, is still living, and will so continue till the day of doom among the fairies.

WICKED CAPTAIN WALSHAW, OF WAULING

CHAPTER I.

Peg O'Neill Pays the Captain's Debts

A very odd thing happened to my uncle, Mr. Watson, of Haddlestone; and to enable you to understand it, I must begin at the beginning.

In the year 1822, Mr. James Walshawe, more commonly known as Captain Walshawe, died at the age of eighty-one years. The Captain in his early days, and so long as health and strength permitted, was a scamp of the active, intriguing sort; and spent his days and nights in sowing his wild oats, of which he seemed to have an inexhaustible stock. The harvest of this tillage was plentifully interspersed with thorns, nettles, and thistles, which stung the husbandman unpleasantly, and did not enrich him.

Captain Walshawe was very well known in the neighborhood of Wauling, and very generally avoided there. A "captain" by courtesy, for he had never reached that rank in the army list. He had quitted the service in 1766, at the age of twenty-five; immediately previous to which period his debts had grown so troublesome, that he was induced to extricate himself by running away with and marrying an heiress.

Though not so wealthy quite as he had imagined, she proved a very comfortable investment for what remained of his shattered affections; and he lived and enjoyed himself very much in his old way, upon her income, getting into no end of scrapes and scandals, and a good deal of debt and money trouble.

When he married his wife, he was quartered in Ireland, at Clonmel, where was a nunnery, in which, as pensioner, resided Miss O'Neill, or as she was called in the country, Peg O'Neill — the heiress of whom I have spoken.

Her situation was the only ingredient of romance in the affair, for the young lady was decidedly plain, though goodhumoured looking, with that style of features which is termed *potato*; and in figure she was a little too plump, and rather short. But she was impressible; and the handsome young English Lieutenant was too much for her monastic tendencies, and she eloped.

In England there are traditions of Irish fortune-hunters, and in Ireland of English. The fact is, it was the vagrant class of each country that chiefly visited the other in old times; and a handsome vagabond, whether at home or abroad, I suppose, made the most of his face, which was also his fortune.

At all events, he carried off the fair one from the sanctuary; and for some sufficient reason, I suppose, they took up their abode at Wauling, in Lancashire.

Here the gallant captain amused himself after his fashion, sometimes running up, of course on business, to London. I believe few wives have ever cried more in a given time than did that poor, dumpy, potato-faced heiress, who got over the nunnery garden wall, and jumped into the handsome Captain's arms, for love.

He spent her income, frightened her out of her wits with oaths and threats, and broke her heart. Latterly she shut herself up pretty nearly altogether in her room. She had an old, rather grim, Irish servant-woman in attendance upon her. This domestic was tall, lean, and religious, and the Captain knew instinctively she hated him; and he hated her in return, often threatened to put her out of the house, and sometimes even to kick her out of the window. And whenever a wet day confined him to the house, or the stable, and he grew tired of smoking, he would begin to swear and curse at her for a *diddled* old mischief-maker, that could never be easy, and was always troubling the house with her cursed stories, and so forth.

But years passed away, and old Molly Doyle remained still in her original position. Perhaps he thought that there must be somebody there, and that he was not, after all, very likely to change for the better.

CHAPTER II

The Blessed Candle

He tolerated another intrusion, too, and thought himself a paragon of patience and easy good nature for so doing. A Roman Catholic clergyman, in a long black frock, with a low standing collar, and a little white muslin fillet round his neck — tall, sallow, with blue chin, and dark steady eyes — used to glide up and down the stairs, and through the passages; and the Captain sometimes met him in one place and sometimes in another. But by a caprice incident to such tempers he treated this cleric exceptionally, and even with a surly sort of courtesy, though he grumbled about his visits behind his back.

I do not know that he had a great deal of moral courage, and the ecclesiastic looked severe and self-possessed; and somehow he thought he had no good opinion of him, and if a natural occasion were offered, might say extremely unpleasant things, and hard to be answered.

Well the time came at last, when poor Peg O'Neill — in an evil hour Mrs. James Walshawe — must cry, and quake, and pray her last. The doctor came from Penlynden, and was just as vague as usual, but more gloomy, and for about a week came and went oftener. The cleric in the long black frock was also daily there. And at last came that last sacrament in the gates of death, when the sinner is traversing those dread steps that never can be retraced; when the face is turned for ever from life, and we see a receding shape, and hear a voice already irrevocably in the land of spirits.

So the poor lady died; and some people said the Captain "felt it very much." I don't think he did. But he was not very well just then, and looked the part of mourner and penitent to admiration — being seedy and sick. He drank a great deal of brandy and water that night, and called in Farmer Dobbs, for want of better company, to drink with him; and told him all his grievances, and how happy he and "the poor lady upstairs" might have been, had it not been for liars, and pick-thanks, and tale-bearers, and the like, who came between them — meaning Molly Doyle — whom, as he waxed eloquent over his liquor, he came at last to curse and rail at by name, with more than his accustomed freedom. And he described his own natural character and amiability in such moving terms, that he wept maudlin tears of sensibility over his theme; and when Dobbs was gone, drank some more grog, and took to railing and cursing again by himself; and then mounted the stairs unsteadily, to see "what the devil Doyle and the other — old witches were about in poor Peg's room."

When he pushed open the door, he found some half-dozen crones, chiefly Irish, from the neighbouring town of Hackleton, sitting over tea and snuff, etc., with candles lighted round the corpse, which was arrayed in a strangely cut robe of brown serge. She had secretly belonged to some order — I think the Carmelite, but I am not certain — and wore the habit in her coffin.

"What the d —— are you doing with my wife?" cried the Captain, rather thickly. "How dare you dress her up in this —— trumpery, you — you cheating old witch; and what's that candle doing in her hand?"

I think he was a little startled, for the spectacle was grisly enough. The dead lady was arrayed in this strange brown robe, and in her rigid fingers, as in a socket, with the large wooden beads and cross wound round it, burned a wax candle, shedding its white light over the sharp features of the corpse. Moll Doyle was not to be put down by the Captain, whom she hated, and accordingly, in her phrase, "he got as good as he gave." And the Captain's wrath waxed fiercer, and he chucked the wax taper from the dead hand, and was on the point of flinging it at the old serving-woman's head.

"The holy candle, you sinner!" cried she.

"I've a mind to make you eat it, you beast," cried the Captain.

But I think he had not known before what it was, for he subsided a little sulkily, and he stuffed his hand with the candle (quite extinct by this time) into his pocket, and said he —

"You know devilish well you had no business going on with y-y-your d —— *witch*-craft about my poor wife, without my leave — you do — and you'll please take off that d —— brown pinafore, and get her decently into her coffin, and I'll pitch your devil's waxlight into the sink."

And the Captain stalked out of the room.

"An' now her poor sowl's in prison, you wretch, be the mains o' ye; an' may yer own be shut into the wick o' that same candle, till it's burned out, ye savage."

"I'd have you ducked for a witch, for twopence," roared the Captain up the staircase, with his hand on the banisters, standing on the lobby. But the door of the chamber of death clapped angrily, and he went down to the parlour, where he examined the holy candle for a while, with a tipsy gravity, and then with something of that reverential feeling for the symbolic, which is not uncommon in rakes and scamps, he thoughtfully locked it up in a press, where were accumulated all sorts of obsolete rubbish — soiled packs of cards, disused tobacco pipes, broken powder flasks, his military sword, and a dusky bundle of the "Flash Songster," and other questionable literature.

He did not trouble the dead lady's room any more. Being a volatile man it is probable that more cheerful plans and occupations began to entertain his fancy.

CHAPTER III

My Uncle Watson Visits Wauling

So the poor lady was buried decently, and Captain Walshawe reigned alone for many years at Wauling. He was too shrewd and too experienced by this time to run violently down the steep hill that leads to ruin. So there was a method in his madness; and after a widowed career of more than forty years, he, too, died at last with some guineas in his purse.

Forty years and upwards is a great *edax rerum*, and a wonderful chemical power. It acted forcibly upon the gay Captain Walshawe. Gout supervened, and was no more conducive to temper than to enjoyment, and made his elegant hands lumpy at all the small joints, and turned them slowly into crippled claws. He grew stout when his exercise was interfered with, and ultimately almost corpulent. He suffered from what Mr. Holloway calls "bad legs," and was wheeled about in a great leathern-backed chair, and his infirmities went on accumulating with his years.

I am sorry to say, I never heard that he repented, or turned his thoughts seriously to the future. On the contrary, his talk grew fouler, and his fun ran upon his favourite sins, and his temper waxed more truculent. But he did not sink into dotage. Considering his bodily infirmities, his energies and his malignities, which were many and active, were marvellously little abated by time. So he went on to the close. When his temper was stirred, he cursed and swore in a way that made decent people tremble. It was a word and a blow with him; the latter, luckily, not very sure now. But he would seize his crutch and make a swoop or a pound at the offender, or shy his medicine-bottle, or his tumbler, at his head.

It was a peculiarity of Captain Walshawe, that he, by this time, hated nearly everybody. My uncle, Mr. Watson, of Haddlestone, was cousin to the Captain, and his heir-at-law. But my uncle had lent him money on mortgage of his estates, and there had been a treaty to sell, and terms and a price were agreed upon, in "articles" which the lawyers said were still in force.

I think the ill-conditioned Captain bore him a grudge for being richer than he, and would have liked to do him an ill turn. But it did not lie in his way; at least while he was living.

My uncle Watson was a Methodist, and what they call a "classleader"; and, on the whole, a very good man. He was now near fifty — grave, as becomed his profession — somewhat dry — and a little severe, perhaps — but a just man.

A letter from the Penlynden doctor reached him at Haddlestone, announcing the death of the wicked old Captain; and suggesting his attendance at the funeral, and the expediency of his being on the spot to look after things at Wauling. The reasonableness of this striking my good uncle, he made his journey to the old house in Lancashire incontinently, and reached it in time for the funeral.

My uncle, whose traditions of the Captain were derived from his mother, who remembered him in his slim, handsome youth — in shorts, cocked-hat and lace, was amazed at the bulk of the coffin which contained his mortal remains; but the lid being already screwed down, he did not see the face of the bloated old sinner.

CHAPTER IV

In the Parlour

What I relate, I had from the lips of my uncle, who was a truthful man, and not prone to fancies.

The day turning out awfully rainy and tempestuous, he persuaded the doctor and the attorney to remain for the night at Wauling.

There was no will — the attorney was sure of that; for the Captain's enmities were perpetually shifting, and he could never quite make up his mind, as to how best to give effect to a malignity whose direction was constantly being modified. He had had instructions for drawing a will a dozen times over. But the process had always been arrested by the intending testator.

Search being made, no will was found. The papers, indeed, were all right, with one important exception: the leases were nowhere to be seen. There were special circumstances connected with several of the principal tenancies on the estate — unnecessary here to detail — which rendered the loss of these documents one of very serious moment, and even of very obvious danger.

My uncle, therefore, searched strenuously. The attorney was at his elbow, and the doctor helped with a suggestion now and then. The old serving-man seemed an honest deaf creature, and really knew nothing.

My uncle Watson was very much perturbed. He fancied — but this possibly was only fancy — that he had detected for a moment a queer look in the attorney's face; and from that instant it became fixed in his mind that he knew all about the leases. Mr. Watson expounded that evening in the parlour to the doctor, the attorney, and the deaf servant. Ananias and Sapphira figured in the foreground; and the awful nature of fraud and theft, of tampering in anywise with the plain rule of honesty in matters pertaining to estates, etc., were pointedly dwelt upon; and then came a long and strenuous prayer, in which he entreated with fervour and aplomb that the hard heart of the sinner who had abstracted the leases might be softened or broken in such a way as to lead to their restitution; or that, if he continued reserved and contumacious, it might at least be the will of Heaven to bring him to public justice and the documents to light. The fact is, that he was praying all this time at the attorney.

When these religious exercises were over, the visitors retired to their rooms, and my Uncle Watson wrote two or three pressing letters by the fire. When his task was done, it had grown late; the candles were flaring in their sockets, and all in bed, and, I suppose, asleep, but he.

The fire was nearly out, he chilly, and the flame of the candles throbbing strangely in their sockets, shed alternate glare and shadow round the old wainscoted room and its quaint furniture. Outside were all the wild thunder and piping of the storm; and the rattling of distant windows sounded through the passages, and down the stairs, like angry people astir in the house.

My Uncle Watson belonged to a sect who by no means rejected the supernatural, and whose founder, on the contrary, has sanctioned ghosts in the most emphatic way. He was glad therefore to remember, that in prosecuting his search that day, he had seen some six inches of wax candle in the press in the parlour; for he had no fancy to be overtaken by darkness in his present situation. He had no time to lose; and taking the bunch of keys — of which he was now master — he soon fitted the lock, and secured the candle — a treasure in his circumstances; and lighting it, he stuffed it into the socket of one of the expiring candles, and extinguishing the other, he looked round the room in the steady light reassured. At the same moment, an unusual violent gust of the storm blew a handful of gravel against the parlour window, with a sharp rattle that startled him in the midst of the roar and hubbub; and the flame of the candle itself was agitated by the air.

CHAPTER V

The BedChamber

My uncle walked up to bed, guarding his candle with his hand, for the lobby windows were rattling furiously, and he disliked the idea of being left in the dark more than ever.

His bedroom was comfortable, though oldfashioned. He shut and bolted the door. There was a tall looking-glass opposite the foot of his four-poster, on the dressing-table between the windows. He tried to make the curtains meet, but they would not draw; and like many a gentleman in a like perplexity, he did not possess a pin, nor was there one in the huge pincushion beneath the glass.

He turned the face of the mirror away therefore, so that its back was presented to the bed, pulled the curtains together, and placed a chair against them, to prevent their falling open again. There was a good fire, and a reinforcement of round coal and wood inside the fender. So he piled it up to ensure a cheerful blaze through the night, and placing a little black mahogany table, with the legs of a satyr, beside the bed, and his candle upon it, he got between the sheets, and laid his red nightcapped head upon his pillow, and disposed himself to sleep.

The first thing that made him uncomfortable was a sound at the foot of his bed, quite distinct in a momentary lull of the storm. It was only the gentle rustle and rush of the curtains, which fell open again; and as his eyes opened, he saw them resuming their perpendicular dependence, and sat up in his bed almost expecting to see something uncanny in the aperture.

There was nothing, however, but the dressing-table, and other dark furniture, and the window-curtains faintly undulating in the violence of the storm. He did not care to get up, therefore — the fire being bright and cheery — to replace the curtains by a chair, in the position in which he had left them, anticipating possibly a new recurrence of the relapse which had startled him from his incipient doze.

So he got to sleep in a little while again, but he was disturbed by a sound, as he fancied, at the table on which stood the candle. He could not say what it was, only that he wakened with a start, and lying so in some amaze, he did distinctly hear a sound which startled him a good deal, though there was nothing necessarily supernatural in it. He described it as resembling what would occur if you fancied a thinnish table-leaf, with a convex warp in it, depressed the reverse way, and suddenly with a spring recovering its natural convexity. It was a loud, sudden thump, which made the heavy candlestick jump, and there was an end, except that my uncle did not get again into a doze for ten minutes at least.

The next time he awoke, it was in that odd, serene way that sometimes occurs. We open our eyes, we know not why, quite placidly, and are on the instant wide awake. He had had a nap of some duration this time, for his candle-flame was fluttering and flaring, *in articulo*, in the silver socket. But the fire was still bright and cheery; so he popped the extinguisher on the socket, and almost at the same time there came a tap at his door, and a sort of crescendo “hush-sh-sh!” Once more my uncle was sitting up, scared and perturbed, in his bed. He recollected, however, that he had bolted his door; and such inveterate materialists are we in the midst of our spiritualism, that this reassured him, and he breathed a deep sigh, and began to grow tranquil. But after a rest of a minute or two, there came a louder and sharper knock at his door; so that instinctively he called out, “Who’s there?” in a loud, stern key. There was no sort of response, however. The nervous effect of the start subsided; and I think my uncle must have remembered how constantly, especially on a stormy night, these creaks or cracks which simulate all manner of goblin noises, make themselves naturally audible.

CHAPTER VI

The Extinguisher Is Lifted

After a while, then, he lay down with his back turned toward that side of the bed at which was the door, and his face toward the table on which stood the massive old candlestick, capped with its extinguisher, and in that position he closed his eyes. But sleep would not revisit them. All kinds of queer fancies began to trouble him — some of them I remember.

He felt the point of a finger, he averred, pressed most distinctly on the tip of his great toe, as if a living hand were between his sheets, and making a sort of signal of attention or silence. Then again he felt something as large as a rat make a sudden bounce in the middle of his bolster, just under his head. Then a voice said “Oh!” very gently, close at the back of his head. All these things he felt certain of, and yet investigation led to nothing. He felt odd little cramps stealing now and then about him; and then, on a sudden, the middle finger of his right hand was plucked backwards, with a light playful jerk that frightened him awfully.

Meanwhile the storm kept singing, and howling, and ha-ha-hooing hoarsely among the limbs of the old trees and the chimney-pots; and my Uncle Watson, although he prayed and meditated as was his wont when he lay awake, felt his heart throb excitedly, and sometimes thought he was beset with evil spirits, and at others that he was in the early stage of a fever.

He resolutely kept his eyes closed, however, and, like St. Paul’s shipwrecked companions, wished for the day. At last another little doze seems to have stolen upon his senses, for he awoke quietly and completely as before — opening his eyes all at once, and seeing everything as if he had not slept for a moment.

The fire was still blazing redly — nothing uncertain in the light — the massive silver candlestick, topped with its tall extinguisher, stood on the centre of the black mahogany table as before; and, looking by what seemed a sort of accident to the apex of this, he beheld something which made him quite misdoubt the evidence of his eyes.

He saw the extinguisher lifted by a tiny hand, from beneath, and a small human face, no bigger than a thumb-nail, with nicely proportioned features, peep from beneath it. In this Lilliputian countenance was such a ghastly consternation as horrified my uncle unspeakably. Out came a little foot then and there, and a pair of wee legs, in short silk stockings and buckled shoes, then the rest of the figure; and, with the arms holding about the socket, the little legs stretched and stretched, hanging about the stem of the candlestick till the feet reached the base, and so down the satyr-like leg of the table, till they reached the floor, extending elastically, and strangely enlarging in all proportions as they approached the ground, where the feet and buckles were those of a well-shaped, full grown man, and the figure tapering upward until it dwindled to its original fairy dimensions at the top, like an object seen in some strangely curved mirror.

Standing upon the floor he expanded, my amazed uncle could not tell how, into his proper proportions; and stood pretty nearly in profile at the bedside, a handsome and elegantly shaped young man, in a bygone military costume, with a small laced, three-cocked hat and plume on his head, but looking like a man going to be hanged — in unspeakable despair.

He stepped lightly to the hearth, and turned for a few seconds very dejectedly with his back toward the bed and the mantelpiece, and he saw the hilt of his rapier glittering in the firelight; and then walking across the room he placed himself at the dressing-table, visible through the divided curtains at the foot of the bed. The fire was blazing still so brightly that my uncle saw him as distinctly as if half a dozen candles were burning.

CHAPTER VII

The Visitation Culminates

The looking-glass was an old-fashioned piece of furniture, and had a drawer beneath it. My uncle had searched it carefully for the papers in the daytime; but the silent figure pulled the drawer quite out, pressed a spring at the side, disclosing a false receptacle behind it, and from this he drew a parcel of papers tied together with pink tape.

All this time my uncle was staring at him in a horrified state, neither winking nor breathing, and the apparition had not once given the smallest intimation of consciousness that a living person was in the same room. But now, for the first time, it turned its livid stare full upon my uncle with a hateful smile of significance, lifting up the little parcel of papers between his slender finger and thumb. Then he made a long, cunning wink at him, and seemed to blow out one of his cheeks in a burlesque grimace, which, but for the horrific circumstances, would have been ludicrous. My uncle could not tell whether this was really an intentional distortion or only one of those horrid ripples and deflections which were constantly disturbing the proportions of the figure, as if it were seen through some unequal and perverting medium.

The figure now approached the bed, seeming to grow exhausted and malignant as it did so. My uncle's terror nearly culminated at this point, for he believed it was drawing near him with an evil purpose. But it was not so; for the soldier, over whom twenty years seemed to have passed in his brief transit to the dressing-table and back again, threw himself into a great high-backed armchair of stuffed leather at the far side of the fire, and placed his heels on the fender. His feet and legs seemed indistinctly to swell, and swathings showed themselves round them, and they grew into something enormous, and the upper figure swayed and shaped itself into corresponding proportions, a great mass of corpulence, with a cadaverous and malignant face, and the furrows of a great old age, and colourless glassy eyes; and with these changes, which came indefinitely but rapidly as those of a sunset cloud, the fine regimentals faded away, and a loose, gray, woollen drapery, somehow, was there in its stead; and all seemed to be stained and rotten, for swarms of worms seemed creeping in and out, while the figure grew paler and paler, till my uncle, who liked his pipe, and employed the simile naturally, said the whole effigy grew to the colour of tobacco ashes, and the clusters of worms into little wriggling knots of sparks such as we see running over the residuum of a burnt sheet of paper. And so with the strong draught caused by the fire, and the current of air from the window, which was rattling in the storm, the feet seemed to be drawn into the fireplace, and the whole figure, light as ashes, floated away with them, and disappeared with a whisk up the capacious old chimney.

It seemed to my uncle that the fire suddenly darkened and the air grew icy cold, and there came an awful roar and riot of tempest, which shook the old house from top to base, and sounded like the yelling of a bloodthirsty mob on receiving a new and long-expected victim.

Good Uncle Watson used to say, "I have been in many situations of fear and danger in the course of my life, but never did I pray with so much agony before or since; for then, as now, it was clear beyond a cavil that I had actually beheld the phantom of an evil spirit."

CONCLUSION

Now there are two curious circumstances to be observed in this relation of my uncle's, who was, as I have said, a perfectly veracious man.

First — The wax candle which he took from the press in the parlour and burnt at his bedside on that horrible night was unquestionably, according to the testimony of the old deaf servant, who had been fifty years at Wauling, that identical piece of "holy candle" which had stood in the fingers of the poor lady's corpse, and concerning which the old Irish crone, long since dead, had delivered the curious curse I have mentioned against the Captain.

Secondly — Behind the drawer under the looking-glass, he did actually discover a second but secret drawer, in which were concealed the identical papers which he had suspected the attorney of having made away with. There were circumstances, too, afterwards disclosed which convinced my uncle that the old man had deposited them there preparatory to burning them, which he had nearly made up his mind to do.

Now, a very remarkable ingredient in this tale of my Uncle Watson was this, that so far as my father, who had never seen Captain Walshawe in the course of his life, could gather, the phantom had exhibited a horrible and grotesque, but unmistakeable resemblance to that defunct scamp in the various stages of his long life.

Wauling was sold in the year 1837, and the old house shortly after pulled down, and a new one built nearer to the river. I often wonder whether it was rumoured to be haunted, and, if so, what stories were current about it. It was a commodious and stanch old house, and withal rather handsome; and its demolition was certainly suspicious.

THE CHILD THAT WENT WITH THE FAIRIES

Eastward of the old city of Limerick, about ten Irish miles under the range of mountains known as the Slieveelim hills, famous as having afforded Sarsfield a shelter among their rocks and hollows, when he crossed them in his gallant descent upon the cannon and ammunition of King William, on its way to the beleaguering army, there runs a very old and narrow road. It connects the Limerick road to Tipperary with the old road from Limerick to Dublin, and runs by bog and pasture, hill and hollow, straw-thatched village, and roofless castle, not far from twenty miles.

Skirting the healthy mountains of which I have spoken, at one part it becomes singularly lonely. For more than three Irish miles it traverses a deserted country. A wide, black bog, level as a lake, skirted with copse, spreads at the left, as you journey northward, and the long and irregular line of mountain rises at the right, clothed in heath, broken with lines of grey rock that resemble the bold and irregular outlines of fortifications, and riven with many a gully, expanding here and there into rocky and wooded glens, which open as they approach the road.

A scanty pasturage, on which browsed a few scattered sheep or kine, skirts this solitary road for some miles, and under shelter of a hillock, and of two or three great ash-trees, stood, not many years ago, the little thatched cabin of a widow named Mary Ryan.

Poor was this widow in a land of poverty. The thatch had acquired the grey tint and sunken outlines, that show how the alternations of rain and sun have told upon that perishable shelter.

But whatever other dangers threatened, there was one well provided against by the care of other times. Round the cabin stood half a dozen mountain ashes, as the rowans, inimical to witches, are there called. On the worn planks of the door were nailed two horseshoes, and over the lintel and spreading along the thatch, grew, luxuriant, patches of that ancient cure for many maladies, and prophylactic against the machinations of the evil one, the house-leek. Descending into the doorway, in the *chiaroscuro* of the interior, when your eye grew sufficiently accustomed to that dim light, you might discover, hanging at the head of the widow's wooden-roofed bed, her beads and a phial of holy water.

Here certainly were defences and bulwarks against the intrusion of that unearthly and evil power, of whose vicinity this solitary family were constantly reminded by the outline of Lisnavoura, that lonely hillhaunt of the "Good people," as the fairies are called euphemistically, whose strangely domelike summit rose not half a mile away, looking like an outwork of the long line of mountain that sweeps by it.

It was at the fall of the leaf, and an autumnal sunset threw the lengthening shadow of haunted Lisnavoura, close in front of the solitary little cabin, over the undulating slopes and sides of Slieveelim. The birds were singing among the branches in the thinning leaves of the melancholy ash-trees that grew at the roadside in front of the door. The widow's three younger children were playing on the road, and their voices mingled with the evening song of the birds. Their elder sister, Nell, was "within in the house," as their phrase is, seeing after the boiling of the potatoes for supper.

Their mother had gone down to the bog, to carry up a hamper of turf on her back. It is, or was at least, a charitable custom — and if not disused, long may it continue — for the wealthier people when cutting their turf and stacking it in the bog, to make a smaller stack for the behoof of the poor, who were welcome to take from it so long as it lasted, and thus the potato pot was kept boiling, and hearth warm that would have been cold enough but for that goodnatured bounty, through wintry months.

Moll Ryan trudged up the steep "bohereen" whose banks were overgrown with thorn and brambles, and stooping under her burden, reentered her door, where her dark-haired daughter Nell met her with a welcome, and relieved her of her hamper.

Moll Ryan looked round with a sigh of relief, and drying her forehead, uttered the Munster ejaculation:

"Eiah, wisha! It's tired I am with it, God bless it. And where's the craythurs, Nell?"

"Playin' out on the road, mother; didn't ye see them and you comin' up?"

"No; there was no one before me on the road," she said, uneasily; "not a soul, Nell; and why didn't ye keep an eye on them?"

"Well, they're in the haggard, playin' there, or round by the back o' the house. Will I call them in?"

"Do so, good girl, in the name o' God. The hens is comin' home, see, and the sun was just down over Knockdoulah, an' I comin' up."

So out ran tall, dark-haired Nell, and standing on the road, looked up and down it; but not a sign of her two little brothers, Con and Bill, or her little sister, Peg, could she see. She called them; but no answer came from the little haggard, fenced with straggling bushes. She listened, but the sound of their voices was missing. Over the stile, and behind the house she ran — but there all was silent and deserted.

She looked down toward the bog, as far as she could see; but they did not appear. Again she listened — but in vain. At first she had felt angry, but now a different feeling overcame her, and she grew pale. With an undefined boding she looked toward the heathy boss of Lisnavoura, now darkening into the deepest purple against the flaming sky of sunset.

Again she listened with a sinking heart, and heard nothing but the farewell twitter and whistle of the birds in the bushes around. How many stories had she listened to by the winter hearth, of children stolen by the fairies, at nightfall, in lonely places! With this fear she knew her mother was haunted.

No one in the country round gathered her little flock about her so early as this frightened widow, and no door "in the seven parishes" was barred so early.

Sufficiently fearful, as all young people in that part of the world are of such dreaded and subtle agents, Nell was even more than usually afraid of them, for her terrors were infected and redoubled by her mother's. She was looking towards Lisnavoura in a trance of fear, and crossed herself again and again, and whispered prayer after prayer. She was interrupted by her mother's voice on the road calling her loudly. She answered, and ran round to the front of the cabin, where she found her standing.

"And where in the world's the craythurs — did ye see sight o' them anywhere?" cried Mrs. Ryan, as the girl came over the stile.

"Arrah! mother, 'tis only what they're run down the road a bit. We'll see them this minute coming back. It's like goats they are, climbin' here and runnin' there; an' if I had them here, in my hand, maybe I wouldn't give them a hiding all round."

"May the Lord forgive you, Nell! the childhers gone. They're took, and not a soul near us, and Father Tom three miles away! And what'll I do, or who's to help us this night? Oh, werristhru, werristhru! The craythurs is gone!"

"Whisht, mother, be aisy: don't ye see them comin' up?"

And then she shouted in menacing accents, waving her arm, and beckoning the children, who were seen approaching on the road, which some little way off made a slight dip, which had concealed them. They were approaching from the westward, and from the direction of the dreaded hill of Lisnavoura.

But there were only two of the children, and one of them, the little girl, was crying. Their mother and sister hurried forward to meet them, more alarmed than ever.

"Where is Billy — where is he?" cried the mother, nearly breathless, so soon as she was within hearing.

"He's gone — they took him away; but they said he'll come back again," answered little Con, with the dark brown hair.

"He's gone away with the grand ladies," blubbered the little girl.

"What ladies — where? Oh, Leum, asthora! My darlin', are you gone away at last? Where is he? Who took him? What ladies are you talkin' about? What way did he go?" she cried in distraction.

"I couldn't see where he went, mother; 'twas like as if he was going to Lisnavoura."

With a wild exclamation the distracted woman ran on towards the hill alone, clapping her hands, and crying aloud the name of her lost child.

Scared and horrified, Nell, not daring to follow, gazed after her, and burst into tears; and the other children raised high their lamentations in shrill rivalry.

Twilight was deepening. It was long past the time when they were usually barred securely within their habitation. Nell led the younger children into the cabin, and made them sit down by the turf fire, while she stood in the open door, watching in great fear for the return of her mother.

After a long while they did see their mother return. She came in and sat down by the fire, and cried as if her heart would break.

"Will I bar the doore, mother?" asked Nell.

"Ay, do — didn't I lose enough, this night, without lavin' the doore open, for more o' yez to go; but first take an' sprinkle a dust o' the holy waters over ye, acuishla, and bring it here till I throw a taste iv it over myself and the craythurs; an' I wondher, Nell, you'd forget to do the like yourself, lettin' the craythurs out so near nightfall. Come here and sit on my knees, asthora, come to me, mavourneen, and hould me fast, in the name o' God, and I'll hould you fast that none can take yez from me, and tell me all about it, and what it was — the Lord between us and harm — an' how it happened, and who was in it."

And the door being barred, the two children, sometimes speaking together, often interrupting one another, often interrupted by their mother, managed to tell this strange story, which I had better relate connectedly and in my own language.

The Widow Ryan's three children were playing, as I have said, upon the narrow old road in front of her door. Little Bill or Leum, about five years old, with golden hair and large blue eyes, was a very pretty boy, with all the clear tints of healthy childhood, and that gaze of earnest simplicity which belongs not to town children of the same age. His little sister Peg, about a year older, and his brother Con, a little more than a year elder than she, made up the little group.

Under the great old ash-trees, whose last leaves were falling at their feet, in the light of an October sunset, they were playing with the hilarity and eagerness of rustic children, clamouring together, and their faces were turned toward the west and storied hill of Lisnavoura.

Suddenly a startling voice with a screech called to them from behind, ordering them to get out of the way, and turning, they saw a sight, such as they never beheld before. It was a carriage drawn by four horses that were pawing and snorting, in impatience, as it just pulled up. The children were almost under their feet, and scrambled to the side of the road next their own door.

This carriage and all its appointments were oldfashioned and gorgeous, and presented to the children, who had never seen anything finer than a turf car, and once, an old chaise that passed that way from Killaloe, a spectacle perfectly dazzling.

Here was antique splendour. The harness and trappings were scarlet, and blazing with gold. The horses were huge, and snow white, with great manes, that as they tossed and shook them in the air, seemed to stream and float sometimes longer and sometimes shorter, like so much smoke — their tails were long, and tied up in bows of broad scarlet and gold ribbon. The coach itself was glowing with colours, gilded and emblazoned. There were footmen in gay liveries, and three-cocked hats, like the coachman's; but he had a great wig, like a judge's, and their hair was frizzed out and powdered, and a long thick "pigtail," with a bow to it, hung down the back of each.

All these servants were diminutive, and ludicrously out of proportion with the enormous horses of the equipage, and had sharp, sallow features, and small, restless fiery eyes, and faces of cunning and malice that chilled the children. The little coachman was scowling and showing his white fangs under his cocked hat, and his little blazing beads of eyes were quivering with fury in their sockets as he whirled his whip round and round over their heads, till the lash of it looked like a streak of fire in the evening sun, and sounded like the cry of a legion of "fillapoueeeks" in the air.

"Stop the princess on the highway!" cried the coachman, in a piercing treble.

"Stop the princess on the highway!" piped each footman in turn, scowling over his shoulder down on the children, and grinding his keen teeth.

The children were so frightened they could only gape and turn white in their panic. But a very sweet voice from the open window of the carriage reassured them, and arrested the attack of the lackeys.

A window and "very grand-looking" lady was smiling from it on them, and they all felt pleased in the strange light of that smile.

"The boy with the golden hair, I think," said the lady, bending her large and wonderfully clear eyes on little Leum.

The upper sides of the carriage were chiefly of glass, so that the children could see another woman inside, whom they did not like so well.

This was a black woman, with a wonderfully long neck, hung round with many strings of large variously-coloured beads, and on her head was a sort of turban of silk striped with all the colours of the rainbow, and fixed in it was a golden star.

This black woman had a face as thin almost as a death's-head, with high cheekbones, and great goggle eyes, the whites of which, as well as her wide range of teeth, showed in brilliant contrast with her skin, as she looked over the beautiful lady's shoulder, and whispered something in her ear.

"Yes; the boy with the golden hair, I think," repeated the lady.

And her voice sounded sweet as a silver bell in the children's ears, and her smile beguiled them like the light of an enchanted lamp, as she leaned from the window with a look of ineffable fondness on the golden-haired boy, with the large blue eyes; insomuch that little Billy, looking up, smiled in return with a wondering fondness, and when she stooped down, and stretched her jewelled arms towards him, he stretched his little hands up, and how they touched the other children did not know; but, saying, "Come and give me a kiss, my darling," she raised him, and he seemed to ascend in her small fingers as lightly as a feather, and she held him in her lap and covered him with kisses.

Nothing daunted, the other children would have been only too happy to change places with their favoured little brother. There was only one thing that was unpleasant, and a little frightened them, and that was the black woman, who stood and stretched forward, in the carriage as before. She gathered a rich silk and gold handkerchief that was in her fingers up to her lips, and seemed to thrust ever so much of it, fold after fold, into her capacious mouth, as they thought to smother her laughter, with which she seemed convulsed, for she was shaking and quivering, as it seemed, with suppressed merriment; but her eyes, which remained uncovered, looked angrier than they had ever seen eyes look before.

But the lady was so beautiful they looked on her instead, and she continued to caress and kiss the little boy on her knee; and smiling at the other children she held up a large russet apple in her fingers, and the carriage began to move slowly on, and with a nod inviting them to take the fruit, she dropped it on the road from the window; it rolled some way beside the wheels, they following, and then she dropped another, and then another, and so on. And the same thing happened to all; for just as either of the children who ran beside had caught the rolling apple, somehow it slipped into a hole or ran into a ditch, and looking up they saw the lady drop another from the window, and so the chase was taken up and continued till they got, hardly knowing how far they had gone, to the old cross-road that leads to Owney. It seemed that there the horses' hoofs and carriage wheels rolled up a wonderful dust, which being caught in one of those eddies that whirl the dust up into a column, on the calmest day, enveloped the children for a moment, and passed whirling on towards Lisnavoura, the carriage, as they fancied, driving in the centre of it; but suddenly it subsided, the straws and leaves floated to the ground, the dust dissipated itself, but the white horses and the lackeys, the gilded carriage, the lady and their little golden-haired brother were gone.

At the same moment suddenly the upper rim of the clear setting sun disappeared behind the hill of Knockdoula, and it was twilight. Each child felt the transition like a shock — and the sight of the rounded summit of Lisnavoura, now closely overhanging them, struck them with a new fear.

They screamed their brother's name after him, but their cries were lost in the vacant air. At the same time they thought they heard a hollow voice say, close to them, "Go home."

Looking round and seeing no one, they were scared, and hand in hand — the little girl crying wildly, and the boy white as ashes, from fear, they trotted homeward, at their best speed, to tell, as we have seen, their strange story.

Molly Ryan never more saw her darling. But something of the lost little boy was seen by his former playmates.

Sometimes when their mother was away earning a trifle at haymaking, and Nelly washing the potatoes for their dinner, or "beating" clothes in the little stream that flows in the hollow close by, they saw the pretty face of little Billy peeping in archly at the door, and smiling silently at them, and as they ran to embrace him, with cries of delight, he drew back, still smiling archly, and when they got out into the open day, he was gone, and they could see no trace of him anywhere.

This happened often, with slight variations in the circumstances of the visit. Sometimes he would peep for a longer time, sometimes for a shorter time, sometimes his little hand would come in, and, with bended finger, beckon them to follow; but always he was smiling with the same arch look and wary silence — and always he was gone when they reached the door. Gradually these visits grew less and less frequent, and in about eight months they ceased altogether, and little Billy, irretrievably lost, took rank in their memories with the dead.

One wintry morning, nearly a year and a half after his disappearance, their mother having set out for Limerick soon after cockcrow, to sell some fowls at the market, the little girl, lying by the side of her elder sister, who was fast asleep, just at the grey of the morning heard the latch lifted softly, and saw little Billy enter and close the door gently after him. There was light enough to see that he was barefoot and ragged, and looked pale and famished. He went straight to the fire, and cowered over the turf embers, and rubbed his hands slowly, and seemed to shiver as he gathered the smouldering turf together.

The little girl clutched her sister in terror and whispered, "Waken, Nelly, waken; here's Billy come back!"

Nelly slept soundly on, but the little boy, whose hands were extended close over the coals, turned and looked toward the bed, it seemed to her, in fear, and she saw the glare of the embers reflected on his thin cheek as he turned toward her. He rose and went, on tiptoe, quickly to the door, in silence, and let himself out as softly as he had come in.

After that, the little boy was never seen any more by any one of his kindred.

"Fairy doctors," as the dealers in the preternatural, who in such cases were called in, are termed, did all that in them lay — but in vain. Father Tom came down, and tried what holier rites could do, but equally without result. So little Billy was dead to mother, brother, and sisters; but no grave received him. Others whom affection cherished, lay in holy ground, in the old churchyard of Abington, with headstone to mark the spot over which the survivor might kneel and say a kind prayer for the peace of the departed soul. But there was no landmark to show where little Billy was hidden from their loving eyes, unless it was in the old hill of Lisnavoura, that cast its long shadow at sunset before the cabin-door; or that, white and filmy in the moonlight, in later years, would occupy his brother's gaze as he returned from fair or market, and draw from him a sigh and a prayer for the little brother he had lost so long ago, and was never to see again.

LOUGH GUIR

When the present writer was a boy of twelve or thirteen, he first made the acquaintance of Miss Anne Baily, of Lough Guir, in the county of Limerick. She and her sister were the last representatives at that place, of an extremely good old name in the county. They were both what is termed "old maids," and at that time past sixty. But never were old ladies more hospitable, lively, and kind, especially to young people. They were both remarkably agreeable and clever. Like all old county ladies of their time, they were great genealogists, and could recount the origin, generations, and intermarriages, of every county family of note.

These ladies were visited at their house at Lough Guir by Mr. Crofton Croker; and are, I think, mentioned, by name, in the second series of his fairy legends; the series in which (probably communicated by Miss Anne Baily), he recounts some of the picturesque traditions of those beautiful lakes — lakes, I should no longer say, for the smaller and prettier has since been drained, and gave up from its depths some long lost and very interesting relics.

In their drawingroom stood a curious relic of another sort: old enough, too, though belonging to a much more modern period. It was the ancient stirrup cup of the hospitable house of Lough Guir. Crofton Croker has preserved a sketch of this curious glass. I have often had it in my hand. It had a short stem; and the cup part, having the bottom rounded, rose cylindrically, and, being of a capacity to contain a whole bottle of claret, and almost as narrow as an old-fashioned ale glass, was tall to a degree that filled me with wonder. As it obliged the rider to extend his arm as he raised the glass, it must have tried a tipsy man, sitting in the saddle, pretty severely. The wonder was that the marvellous tall glass had come down to our times without a crack.

There was another glass worthy of remark in the same drawingroom. It was gigantic, and shaped conically, like one of those old-fashioned jelly glasses which used to be seen upon the shelves of confectioners. It was engraved round the rim with the words, "The glorious, pious, and immortal memory"; and on grand occasions, was filled to the brim, and after the manner of a loving cup, made the circuit of the Whig guests, who owed all to the hero whose memory its legend invoked.

It was now but the transparent phantom of those solemn convivialities of a generation, who lived, as it were, within hearing of the cannon and shoutings of those stirring times. When I saw it, this glass had long retired from politics and carousals, and stood peacefully on a little table in the drawingroom, where ladies' hands replenished it with fair water, and crowned it daily with flowers from the garden.

Miss Anne Baily's conversation ran oftener than her sister's upon the legendary and supernatural; she told her stories with the sympathy, the colour, and the mysterious air which contribute so powerfully to effect, and never wearied of answering questions about the old castle, and amusing her young audience with fascinating little glimpses of old adventure and bygone days. My memory retains the picture of my early friend very distinctly. A slim straight figure, above the middle height; a general likeness to the full-length portrait of that delightful Countess d'Aulnois, to whom we all owe our earliest and most brilliant glimpses of fairyland; something of her gravely-pleasant countenance, plain, but refined and ladylike, with that kindly mystery in her sidelong glance and uplifted finger, which indicated the approaching climax of a tale of wonder.

Lough Guir is a kind of centre of the operations of the Munster fairies. When a child is stolen by the "good people," Lough Guir is conjectured to be the place of its unearthly transmutation from the human to the fairy state. And beneath its waters lie enchanted, the grand old castle of the Desmonds, the great earl himself, his beautiful young countess, and all the retinue that surrounded him in the years of his splendour, and at the moment of his catastrophe.

Here, too, are historic associations. The huge square tower that rises at one side of the stableyard close to the old house, to a height that amazed my young eyes, though robbed of its battlements and one story, was a stronghold of the last rebellious Earl of Desmond, and is specially mentioned in that delightful old folio, the *Hibernia Pacata*, as having, with its Irish garrison on the battlements, defied the army of the lord deputy, then marching by upon the summits of the overhanging hills. The house, built under shelter of this stronghold of the once proud and turbulent Desmonds, is old, but snug, with a multitude of small low rooms, such as I have seen in houses of the same age in Shropshire and the neighbouring English counties.

The hills that overhang the lakes appeared to me, in my young days (and I have not seen them since), to be clothed with a short soft verdure, of a hue so dark and vivid as I had never seen before.

In one of the lakes is a small island, rocky and wooded, which is believed by the peasantry to represent the top of the highest tower of the castle which sank, under a spell, to the bottom. In certain states of the atmosphere, I have heard educated people say, when in a boat you have reached a certain distance, the island appears to rise some feet from the water, its rocks assume the appearance of masonry, and the whole circuit presents very much the effect of the battlements of a castle rising above the surface of the lake. This was Miss Anne Baily's story of the submersion of this lost castle:

The Magician Earl

It is well known that the great Earl of Desmond, though history pretends to dispose of him differently, lives to this hour enchanted in his castle, with all his household, at the bottom of the lake.

There was not, in his day, in all the world, so accomplished a magician as he. His fairest castle stood upon an island in the lake, and to this he brought his young and beautiful bride, whom he loved but too well; for she prevailed upon his folly to risk all to gratify her imperious caprice.

They had not been long in this beautiful castle, when she one day presented herself in the chamber in which her husband studied his forbidden art, and there implored him to exhibit before her some of the wonders of his evil science. He resisted long; but her entreaties, tears, and wheedlings were at length too much for him and he consented.

But before beginning those astonishing transformations with which he was about to amaze her, he explained to her the awful conditions and dangers of the experiment.

Alone in this vast apartment, the walls of which were lapped, far below, by the lake whose dark waters lay waiting to swallow them, she must witness a certain series of frightful phenomena, which once commenced, he could neither abridge nor mitigate; and if throughout their ghastly succession she spoke one word, or uttered one exclamation, the castle and all that it contained would in one instant subside to the bottom of the lake, there to remain, under the servitude of a strong spell, for ages.

The dauntless curiosity of the lady having prevailed, and the oaken door of the study being locked and barred, the fatal experiments commenced.

Muttering a spell, as he stood before her, feathers sprouted thickly over him, his face became contracted and hooked, a cadaverous smell filled the air, and, with heavy winnowing wings, a gigantic vulture rose in his stead, and swept round and round the room, as if on the point of pouncing upon her.

The lady commanded herself through this trial, and instantly another began.

The bird alighted near the door, and in less than a minute changed, she saw not how, into a horribly deformed and dwarfish hag: who, with yellow skin hanging about her face and enormous eyes, swung herself on crutches toward the lady, her mouth foaming with fury, and her grimaces and contortions becoming more and more hideous every moment, till she rolled with a yell on the floor, in a horrible convulsion, at the lady's feet, and then changed into a huge serpent, with crest erect, and quivering tongue. Suddenly, as it seemed on the point of darting at her, she saw her husband in its stead, standing pale before her, and, with his finger on his lip, enforcing the continued necessity of silence. He then placed himself at his length on the floor, and began to stretch himself out and out, longer and longer, until his head nearly reached to one end of the vast room, and his feet to the other.

This horror overcame her. The ill-starred lady uttered a wild scream, whereupon the castle and all that was within it, sank in a moment to the bottom of the lake.

But, once in every seven years, by night, the Earl of Desmond and his retinue emerge, and cross the lake, in shadowy cavalcade. His white horse is shod with silver. On that one night, the earl may ride till daybreak, and it behoves him to make good use of his time; for, until the silver shoes of his steed be worn through, the spell that holds him and his beneath the lake, will retain its power.

When I (Miss Anne Baily) was a child, there was still living a man named Teigue O'Neill, who had a strange story to tell.

He was a smith, and his forge stood on the brow of the hill, overlooking the lake, on a lonely part of the road to Cahir Conlish. One bright moonlight night, he was working very late, and quite alone. The clink of his hammer, and the wavering glow reflected through the open door on the bushes at the other side of the narrow road, were the only tokens that told of life and vigil for miles around.

In one of the pauses of his work, he heard the ring of many hoofs ascending the steep road that passed his forge, and, standing in this doorway, he was just in time to see a gentleman, on a white horse, who was dressed in a fashion the like of which the smith had never seen before. This man was accompanied and followed by a mounted retinue, as strangely dressed as he.

They seemed, by the clang and clatter that announced their approach, to be riding up the hill at a hard hurry-scurry gallop; but the pace abated as they drew near, and the rider of the white horse who, from his grave and lordly air, he assumed to be a man of rank, and accustomed to command, drew bridle and came to a halt before the smith's door.

He did not speak, and all his train were silent, but he beckoned to the smith, and pointed down to one of his horse's hoofs.

Teigue stooped and raised it, and held it just long enough to see that it was shod with a silver shoe; which, in one place, he said, was worn as thin as a shilling. Instantaneously, his situation was made apparent to him by this sign, and he recoiled with a terrified prayer. The lordly rider, with a look of pain and fury, struck at him suddenly, with something that whistled in the air like a whip; and an icy streak seemed to traverse his body as if he had been cut through with a leaf of steel. But he was without scathe or scar, as he afterwards found. At the same moment he saw the whole cavalcade break into a gallop and disappear down the hill, with a momentary hurtling in the air, like the flight of a volley of cannon shot.

Here had been the earl himself. He had tried one of his accustomed stratagems to lead the smith to speak to him. For it is well known that either for the purpose of abridging or of mitigating his period of enchantment, he seeks to lead people to accost him. But what, in the event of his succeeding, would befall the person whom he had thus ensnared, no one knows.

Moll Rial's Adventure

When Miss Anne Baily was a child, Moll Rial was an old woman. She had lived all her days with the Bailys of Lough Guir; in and about whose house, as was the Irish custom of those days, were a troop of barefooted country girls, scullery maids, or laundresses, or employed about the poultry yard, or running of errands.

Among these was Moll Rial, then a stout goodhumoured lass, with little to think of, and nothing to fret about. She was once washing clothes by the process known universally in Munster as beetling. The washer stands up to her ankles in water, in which she has immersed the clothes, which she lays in that state on a great flat stone, and smacks with lusty strokes of an instrument which bears a rude resemblance to a cricket bat, only shorter, broader, and light enough to be wielded freely with one hand. Thus, they smack the dripping clothes, turning them over and over, sousing them in the water, and replacing them on the same stone, to undergo a repetition of the process, until they are thoroughly washed.

Moll Rial was plying her "beetle" at the margin of the lake, close under the old house and castle. It was between eight and nine o'clock on a fine summer morning, everything looked bright and beautiful. Though quite alone, and though she could not see even the windows of the house (hidden from her view by the irregular ascent and some interposing bushes), her loneliness was not depressing.

Standing up from her work, she saw a gentleman walking slowly down the slope toward her. He was a "grand-looking" gentleman, arrayed in a flowered silk dressing-gown, with a cap of velvet on his head; and as he stepped toward her, in his slippered feet, he showed a very handsome leg. He was smiling graciously as he approached, and drawing a ring from his finger with an air of gracious meaning, which seemed to imply that he wished to make her a present, he raised it in his fingers with a pleased look, and placed it on the flat stones beside the clothes she had been beetling so industriously.

He drew back a little, and continued to look at her with an encouraging smile, which seemed to say: "You have earned your reward; you must not be afraid to take it."

The girl fancied that this was some gentleman who had arrived, as often happened in those hospitable and haphazard times, late and unexpectedly the night before, and who was now taking a little indolent ramble before breakfast.

Moll Rial was a little shy, and more so at having been discovered by so grand a gentleman with her petticoats gathered a little high about her bare shins. She looked down, therefore, upon the water at her feet, and then she saw a ripple of blood, and then another, ring after ring, coming and going to and from her feet. She cried out the sacred name in horror, and, lifting her eyes, the courtly gentleman was gone, but the blood-rings about her feet spread with the speed of light over the surface of the lake, which for a moment glowed like one vast estuary of blood.

Here was the earl once again, and Moll Rial declared that if it had not been for that frightful transformation of the water she would have spoken to him next minute, and would thus have passed under a spell, perhaps as direful as his own.

The Banshee

So old a Munster family as the Bailys, of Lough Guir, could not fail to have their attendant banshee. Everyone attached to the family knew this well, and could cite evidences of that unearthly distinction. I heard Miss Bailly relate the only experience she had personally had of that wild spiritual sympathy.

She said that, being then young, she and Miss Susan undertook a long attendance upon the sick bed of their sister, Miss Kitty, whom I have heard remembered among her contemporaries as the merriest and most entertaining of human beings. This lighthearted young lady was dying of consumption. The sad duties of such attendance being divided among many sisters, as there then were, the night watches devolved upon the two ladies I have named: I think, as being the eldest.

It is not improbable that these long and melancholy vigils, lowering the spirits and exciting the nervous system, prepared them for illusions. At all events, one night at dead of night, Miss Bailly and her sister, sitting in the dying lady's room, heard such sweet and melancholy music as they had never heard before. It seemed to them like distant cathedral music. The room of the dying girl had its windows toward the yard, and the old castle stood near, and full in sight. The music was not in the house, but seemed to come from the yard, or beyond it. Miss Anne Bailly took a candle, and went down the back stairs. She opened the back door, and, standing there, heard the same faint but solemn harmony, and could not tell whether it most resembled the distant music of instruments, or a choir of voices. It seemed to come through the windows of the old castle, high in the air. But when she approached the tower, the music, she thought, came from above the house, at the other side of the yard; and thus perplexed, and at last frightened, she returned.

This aerial music both she and her sister, Miss Susan Bailly, avowed that they distinctly heard, and for a long time. Of the fact she was clear, and she spoke of it with great awe.

The Governess's Dream

This lady, one morning, with a grave countenance that indicated something weighty upon her mind, told her pupils that she had, on the night before, had a very remarkable dream.

The first room you enter in the old castle, having reached the foot of the spiral stone stair, is a large hall, dim and lofty, having only a small window or two, set high in deep recesses in the wall. When I saw the castle many years ago, a portion of this capacious chamber was used as a store for the turf laid in to last the year.

Her dream placed her, alone, in this room, and there entered a grave-looking man, having something very remarkable in his countenance: which impressed her, as a fine portrait sometimes will, with a haunting sense of character and individuality.

In his hand this man carried a wand, about the length of an ordinary walking cane. He told her to observe and remember its length, and to mark well the measurements he was about to make, the result of which she was to communicate to Mr. Baily of Lough Guir.

From a certain point in the wall, with this wand, he measured along the floor, at right angles with the wall, a certain number of its lengths, which he counted aloud; and then, in the same way, from the adjoining wall he measured a certain number of its lengths, which he also counted distinctly. He then told her that at the point where these two lines met, at a depth of a certain number of feet which he also told her, treasure lay buried. And so the dream broke up, and her remarkable visitant vanished.

She took the girls with her to the old castle, where, having cut a switch to the length represented to her in her dream, she measured the distances, and ascertained, as she supposed, the point on the floor beneath which the treasure lay. The same day she related her dream to Mr. Baily. But he treated it laughingly, and took no step in consequence.

Some time after this, she again saw, in a dream, the same remarkable-looking man, who repeated his message, and appeared displeased. But the dream was treated by Mr. Baily as before.

The same dream occurred again, and the children became so clamorous to have the castle floor explored, with pick and shovel, at the point indicated by the thrice-seen messenger, that at length Mr. Baily consented, and the floor was opened, and a trench was sunk at the spot which the governess had pointed out.

Miss Anne Baily, and nearly all the members of the family, her father included, were present at this operation. As the workmen approached the depth described in the vision, the interest and suspense of all increased; and when the iron implements met the solid resistance of a broad flagstone, which returned a cavernous sound to the stroke, the excitement of all present rose to its acme.

With some difficulty the flag was raised, and a chamber of stone work, large enough to receive a moderately-sized crock or pit, was disclosed. Alas! it was empty. But in the earth at the bottom of it, Miss Baily said, she herself saw, as every other bystander plainly did, the circular impression of a vessel: which had stood there, as the mark seemed to indicate, for a very long time.

Both the Miss Bails were strong in their belief hereafterwards, that the treasure which they were convinced had actually been deposited there, had been removed by some more trusting and active listener than their father had proved.

This same governess remained with them to the time of her death, which occurred some years later, under the following circumstances as extraordinary as her dream.

The Earl's Hall

The good governess had a particular liking for the old castle, and when lessons were over, would take her book or her work into a large room in the ancient building, called the Earl's Hall. Here she caused a table and chair to be placed for her use, and in the chiaroscuro would so sit at her favourite occupations, with just a little ray of subdued light, admitted through one of the glassless windows above her, and falling upon her table.

The Earl's Hall is entered by a narrow-arched door, opening close to the winding stair. It is a very large and gloomy room, pretty nearly square, with a lofty vaulted ceiling, and a stone floor. Being situated high in the castle, the walls of which are immensely thick, and the windows very small and few, the silence that reigns here is like that of a subterranean cavern. You hear nothing in this solitude, except perhaps twice in a day, the twitter of a swallow in one of the small windows high in the wall.

This good lady having one day retired to her accustomed solitude, was missed from the house at her wonted hour of return. This in a country house, such as Irish houses were in those days, excited little surprise, and no harm. But when the dinner hour came, which was then, in country houses, five o'clock, and the governess had not appeared, some of her young friends, it being not yet winter, and sufficient light remaining to guide them through the gloom of the dim ascent and passages, mounted the old stone stair to the level of the Earl's Hall, gaily calling to her as they approached.

There was no answer. On the stone floor, outside the door of the Earl's Hall, to their horror, they found her lying insensible. By the usual means she was restored to consciousness; but she continued very ill, and was conveyed to the house, where she took to her bed.

It was there and then that she related what had occurred to her. She had placed herself, as usual, at her little work table, and had been either working or reading — I forget which — for some time, and felt in her usual health and serene spirits. Raising her eyes, and looking towards the door, she saw a horrible-looking little man enter. He was dressed in red, was very short, had a singularly dark face, and a most atrocious countenance. Having walked some steps into the room, with his eyes fixed on her, he stopped, and beckoning to her to follow, moved back toward the door. About half way, again he stopped once more and turned. She was so terrified that she sat staring at the apparition without moving or speaking. Seeing that she had not obeyed him, his face became more frightful and menacing, and as it underwent this change, he raised his hand and stamped on the floor. Gesture, look, and all, expressed diabolical fury. Through sheer extremity of terror she did rise, and, as he turned again, followed him a step or two in the direction of the door. He again stopped, and with the same mute menace, compelled her again to follow him.

She reached the narrow stone doorway of the Earl's Hall, through which he had passed; from the threshold she saw him standing a little way off, with his eyes still fixed on her. Again he signed to her, and began to move along the short passage that leads to the winding stair. But instead of following him further, she fell on the floor in a fit.

The poor lady was thoroughly persuaded that she was not long to survive this vision, and her foreboding proved true. From her bed she never rose. Fever and delirium supervened in a few days and she died. Of course it is possible that fever, already approaching, had touched her brain when she was visited by the phantom, and that it had no external existence.

THE VISION OF TOM CHUFF

At the edge of melancholy Catsteane Moor, in the north of England, with half-a-dozen ancient poplar-trees with rugged and hoary stems around, one smashed across the middle by a flash of lightning thirty summers before, and all by their great height dwarfing the abode near which they stand, there squats a rude stone house, with a thick chimney, a kitchen and bedroom on the ground-floor, and a loft, accessible by a ladder, under the shingle roof, divided into two rooms.

Its owner was a man of ill repute. Tom Chuff was his name. A shockheaded, broad-shouldered, powerful man, though somewhat short, with lowering brows and a sullen eye. He was a poacher, and hardly made an ostensible pretence of earning his bread by any honest industry. He was a drunkard. He beat his wife, and led his children a life of terror and lamentation, when he was at home. It was a blessing to his frightened little family when he absented himself, as he sometimes did, for a week or more together.

On the night I speak of he knocked at the door with his cudgel at about eight o'clock. It was winter, and the night was very dark. Had the summons been that of a bogie from the moor, the inmates of this small house could hardly have heard it with greater terror.

His wife unbarred the door in fear and haste. Her hunchbacked sister stood by the hearth, staring toward the threshold. The children cowered behind.

Tom Chuff entered with his cudgel in his hand, without speaking, and threw himself into a chair opposite the fire. He had been away two or three days. He looked haggard, and his eyes were bloodshot. They knew he had been drinking.

Tom raked and knocked the peat fire with his stick, and thrust his feet close to it. He signed towards the little dresser, and nodded to his wife, and she knew he wanted a cup, which in silence she gave him. He pulled a bottle of gin from his coatpocket, and nearly filling the teacup, drank off the dram at a few gulps.

He usually refreshed himself with two or three drams of this kind before beating the inmates of his house. His three little children, cowering in a corner, eyed him from under a table, as Jack did the ogre in the nursery tale. His wife, Nell, standing behind a chair, which she was ready to snatch up to meet the blow of the cudgel, which might be levelled at her at any moment, never took her eyes off him; and hunchbacked Mary showed the whites of a large pair of eyes, similarly employed, as she stood against the oaken press, her dark face hardly distinguishable in the distance from the brown panel behind it.

Tom Chuff was at his third dram, and had not yet spoken a word since his entrance, and the suspense was growing dreadful, when, on a sudden, he leaned back in his rude seat, the cudgel slipped from his hand, a change and a deathlike pallor came over his face.

For a while they all stared on; such was their fear of him, they dared not speak or move, lest it should prove to have been but a doze, and Tom should wake up and proceed forthwith to gratify his temper and exercise his cudgel.

In a very little time, however, things began to look so odd, that they ventured, his wife and Mary, to exchange glances full of doubt and wonder. He hung so much over the side of the chair, that if it had not been one of cyclopean clumsiness and weight, he would have borne it to the floor. A leaden tint was darkening the pallor of his face. They were becoming alarmed, and finally braving everything his wife timidly said, "Tom!" and then more sharply repeated it, and finally cried the appellative loudly, and again and again, with the terrified accompaniment, "He's dying — he's dying!" her voice rising to a scream, as she found that neither it nor her plucks and shakings of him by the shoulder had the slightest effect in recalling him from his torpor.

And now from sheer terror of a new kind the children added their shrilly piping to the talk and cries of their seniors; and if anything could have called Tom up from his lethargy, it might have been the piercing chorus that made the rude chamber of the poacher's habitation ring again. But Tom continued unmoved, deaf, and stirless.

His wife sent Mary down to the village, hardly a quarter of a mile away, to implore of the doctor, for whose family she did duty as laundress, to come down and look at her husband, who seemed to be dying.

The doctor, who was a goodnatured fellow, arrived. With his hat still on, he looked at Tom, examined him, and when he found that the emetic he had brought with him, on conjecture from Mary's description, did not act, and that his lancet brought no blood, and that he felt a pulseless wrist, he shook his head, and inwardly thought:

"What the plague is the woman crying for? Could she have desired a greater blessing for her children and herself than the very thing that has happened?"

Tom, in fact, seemed quite gone. At his lips no breath was perceptible. The doctor could discover no pulse. His hands and feet were cold, and the chill was stealing up into his body.

The doctor, after a stay of twenty minutes, had buttoned up his greatcoat again and pulled down his hat, and told Mrs. Chuff that there was no use in his remaining any longer, when, all of a sudden, a little rill of blood began to trickle from the lancet-cut in Tom Chuff's temple.

"That's very odd," said the doctor. "Let us wait a little."

I must describe now the sensations which Tom Chuff had experienced.

With his elbows on his knees, and his chin upon his hands, he was staring into the embers, with his gin beside him, when suddenly a swimming came in his head, he lost sight of the fire, and a sound like one stroke of a loud church bell smote his brain.

Then he heard a confused humming, and the leaden weight of his head held him backward as he sank in his chair, and consciousness quite forsook him.

When he came to himself he felt chilled, and was leaning against a huge leafless tree. The night was moonless, and when he looked up he thought he had never seen stars so large and bright, or sky so black. The stars, too, seemed to blink down with longer intervals of darkness, and fiercer and more dazzling emergence, and something, he vaguely thought, of the character of silent menace and fury.

He had a confused recollection of having come there, or rather of having been carried along, as if on men's shoulders, with a sort of rushing motion. But it was utterly indistinct; the imperfect recollection simply of a sensation. He had seen or heard

nothing on his way.

He looked round. There was not a sign of a living creature near. And he began with a sense of awe to recognise the place.

The tree against which he had been leaning was one of the noble old beeches that surround at irregular intervals the churchyard of Shackleton, which spreads its green and wavy lap on the edge of the Moor of Catstean, at the opposite side of which stands the rude cottage in which he had just lost consciousness. It was six miles or more across the moor to his habitation, and the black expanse lay before him, disappearing dismally in the darkness. So that, looking straight before him, sky and land blended together in an undistinguishable and awful blank.

There was a silence quite unnatural over the place. The distant murmur of the brook, which he knew so well, was dead; not a whisper in the leaves about him; the air, earth, everything about and above was indescribably still; and he experienced that quaking of the heart that seems to portend the approach of something awful. He would have set out upon his return across the moor, had he not an undefined presentiment that he was waylaid by something he dared not pass.

The old grey church and tower of Shackleton stood like a shadow in the rear. His eye had grown accustomed to the obscurity, and he could just trace its outline. There were no comforting associations in his mind connected with it; nothing but menace and misgiving. His early training in his lawless calling was connected with this very spot. Here his father used to meet two other poachers, and bring his son, then but a boy, with him.

Under the church porch, towards morning, they used to divide the game they had taken, and take account of the sales they had made on the previous day, and make partition of the money, and drink their gin. It was here he had taken his early lessons in drinking, cursing, and lawlessness. His father's grave was hardly eight steps from the spot where he stood. In his present state of awful dejection, no scene on earth could have so helped to heighten his fear.

There was one object close by which added to his gloom. About a yard away, in rear of the tree, behind himself, and extending to his left, was an open grave, the mould and rubbish piled on the other side. At the head of this grave stood the beech-tree; its columnar stem rose like a huge monumental pillar. He knew every line and crease on its smooth surface. The initial letters of his own name, cut in its bark long ago, had spread out and wrinkled like the grotesque capitals of a fanciful engraver, and now with a sinister significance overlooked the open grave, as if answering his mental question, "Who for is t' grave cut?"

He felt still a little stunned, and there was a faint tremor in his joints that disinclined him to exert himself; and, further, he had a vague apprehension that take what direction he might, there was danger around him worse than that of staying where he was.

On a sudden the stars began to blink more fiercely, a faint wild light overspread for a minute the bleak landscape, and he saw approaching from the moor a figure at a kind of swinging trot, with now and then a zig-zag hop or two, such as men accustomed to cross such places make, to avoid the patches of slob or quag that meet them here and there. This figure resembled his father's, and like him, whistled through his finger by way of signal as he approached; but the whistle sounded not now shrilly and sharp, as in old times, but immensely far away, and seemed to sing strangely through Tom's head. From habit or from fear, in answer to the signal, Tom whistled as he used to do five-and-twenty years ago and more, although he was already chilled with an unearthly fear.

Like his father, too, the figure held up the bag that was in his left hand as he drew near, when it was his custom to call out to him what was in it. It did not reassure the watcher, you may be certain, when a shout unnaturally faint reached him, as the phantom dangled the bag in the air, and he heard with a faint distinctness the words, "Tom Chuff's soul!"

Scarcely fifty yards away from the low churchyard fence at which Tom was standing, there was a wider chasm in the peat, which there threw up a growth of reeds and bulrushes, among which, as the old poacher used to do on a sudden alarm, the approaching figure suddenly cast itself down.

From the same patch of tall reeds and rushes emerged instantaneously what he at first mistook for the same figure creeping on all-fours, but what he soon perceived to be an enormous black dog with a rough coat like a bear's, which at first sniffed about, and then started towards him in what seemed to be a sportive amble, bouncing this way and that, but as it drew near it displayed a pair of fearful eyes that glowed like live coals, and emitted from the monstrous expanse of its jaws a terrifying growl.

This beast seemed on the point of seizing him, and Tom recoiled in panic and fell into the open grave behind him. The edge which he caught as he tumbled gave way, and down he went, expecting almost at the same instant to reach the bottom. But never was such a fall! Bottomless seemed the abyss! Down, down, down, with immeasurable and still increasing speed, through utter darkness, with hair streaming straight upward, breathless, he shot with a rush of air against him, the force of which whirled up his very arms, second after second, minute after minute, through the chasm downward he flew, the icy perspiration of horror covering his body, and suddenly, as he expected to be dashed into annihilation, his descent was in an instant arrested with a tremendous shock, which, however, did not deprive him of consciousness even for a moment.

He looked about him. The place resembled a smoke-stained cavern or catacomb, the roof of which, except for a ribbed arch here and there faintly visible, was lost in darkness. From several rude passages, like the galleries of a gigantic mine, which opened from this centre chamber, was very dimly emitted a dull glow as of charcoal, which was the only light by which he could imperfectly discern the objects immediately about him.

What seemed like a projecting piece of the rock, at the corner of one of these murky entrances, moved on a sudden, and proved to be a human figure, that beckoned to him. He approached, and saw his father. He could barely recognise him, he was so monstrously altered.

"I've been looking for you, Tom. Welcome home, lad; come along to your place."

Tom's heart sank as he heard these words, which were spoken in a hollow and, he thought, derisive voice that made him tremble. But he could not help accompanying the wicked spirit, who led him into a place, in passing which he heard, as it were from within the rock, deadful cries and appeals for mercy.

"What is this?" said he.

"Never mind."

"Who are they?"

"Newcomers, like yourself, lad," answered his father apathetically. "They give over that work in time, finding it is no use."

"What shall I do?" said Tom, in an agony.

"It's all one."

"But what shall I do?" reiterated Tom, quivering in every joint and nerve.

"Grin and bear it, I suppose."

"For God's sake, if ever you cared for me, as I am your own child, let me out of this!"

"There's no way out."

"If there's a way in there's a way out, and for Heaven's sake let me out of this."

But the dreadful figure made no further answer, and glided backwards by his shoulder to the rear; and others appeared in view, each with a faint red halo round it, staring on him with frightful eyes, images, all in hideous variety, of eternal fury or derision. He was growing mad, it seemed, under the stare of so many eyes, increasing in number and drawing closer every moment, and at the same time myriads and myriads of voices were calling him by his name, some far away, some near, some from one point, some from another, some from behind, close to his ears. These cries were increased in rapidity and multitude, and mingled with laughter, with flitting blasphemies, with broken insults and mockeries, succeeded and obliterated by others, before he could half catch their meaning.

All this time, in proportion to the rapidity and urgency of these dreadful sights and sounds, the epilepsy of terror was creeping up to his brain, and with a long and dreadful scream he lost consciousness.

When he recovered his senses, he found himself in a small stone chamber, vaulted above, and with a ponderous door. A single point of light in the wall, with a strange brilliancy illuminated this cell.

Seated opposite to him was a venerable man with a snowy beard of immense length; an image of awful purity and severity. He was dressed in a coarse robe, with three large keys suspended from his girdle. He might have filled one's idea of an ancient porter of a city gate; such spiritual cities, I should say, as John Bunyan loved to describe.

This old man's eyes were brilliant and awful, and fixed on him as they were, Tom Chuff felt himself helplessly in his power. At length he spoke:

"The command is given to let you forth for one trial more. But if you are found again drinking with the drunken, and beating your fellow-servants, you shall return through the door by which you came, and go out no more."

With these words the old man took him by the wrist and led him through the first door, and then unlocking one that stood in the cavern outside, he struck Tom Chuff sharply on the shoulder, and the door shut behind him with a sound that boomed peal after peal of thunder near and far away, and all round and above, till it rolled off gradually into silence. It was totally dark, but there was a fanning of fresh cool air that overpowered him. He felt that he was in the upper world again.

In a few minutes he began to hear voices which he knew, and first a faint point of light appeared before his eyes, and gradually he saw the flame of the candle, and, after that, the familiar faces of his wife and children, and he heard them faintly when they spoke to him, although he was as yet unable to answer.

He also saw the doctor, like an isolated figure in the dark, and heard him say:

"There, now, you have him back. He'll do, I think."

His first words, when he could speak and saw clearly all about him, and felt the blood on his neck and shirt, were:

"Wife, forgie me. I'm a changed man. Send for't sir."

Which last phrase means, "Send for the clergyman."

When the vicar came and entered the little bedroom where the scared poacher, whose soul had died within him, was lying, still sick and weak, in his bed, and with a spirit that was prostrate with terror, Tom Chuff feebly beckoned the rest from the room, and, the door being closed, the good parson heard the strange confession, and with equal amazement the man's earnest and agitated vows of amendment, and his helpless appeals to him for support and counsel.

These, of course, were kindly met; and the visits of the rector, for some time, were frequent.

One day, when he took Tom Chuff's hand on bidding him goodbye, the sick man held it still, and said:

"Ye'r vicar o' Shackleton, sir, and if I sud dee, ye'll promise me a'e thing, as I a promised ye a many. I a said I'll never gie wife, nor barn, nor folk o' no sort, skelp nor sizzup more, and ye'll know o' me no more among the sipers. Nor never will Tom draw trigger, nor set a snare again, but in an honest way, and after that ye'll no make it a bootless bene for me, but bein', as I say, vicar o' Shackleton, and able to do as ye list, ye'll no let them bury me within twenty good yerd-wands measure o' the a'd beech trees that's round the churchyard of Shackleton."

"I see; you would have your grave, when your time really comes, a good way from the place where lay the grave you dreamed of."

"That's jest it. I'd lie at the bottom o' a marl-pit liefer! And I'd be laid in anither churchyard just to be shut o' my fear o' that, but that a' my kinsfolk is buried beyond in Shackleton, and ye'll gie me yer promise, and no break yer word."

"I do promise, certainly. I'm not likely to outlive you; but, if I should, and still be vicar of Shackleton, you shall be buried somewhere as near the middle of the churchyard as we can find space."

"That'll do."

And so content they parted.

The effect of the vision upon Tom Chuff was powerful, and promised to be lasting. With a sore effort he exchanged his life of desultory adventure and comparative idleness for one of regular industry. He gave up drinking; he was as kind as an originally surly nature would allow to his wife and family; he went to church; in fine weather they crossed the moor to Shackleton Church; the vicar said he came there to look at the scenery of his vision, and to fortify his good resolutions by the reminder.

Impressions upon the imagination, however, are but transitory, and a bad man acting under fear is not a free agent; his real character does not appear. But as the images of the imagination fade, and the action of fear abates, the essential qualities of the man reassert themselves.

So, after a time, Tom Chuff began to grow weary of his new life; he grew lazy, and people began to say that he was catching hares, and pursuing his old contraband way of life, under the rose.

He came home one hard night, with signs of the bottle in his thick speech and violent temper. Next day he was sorry, or frightened, at all events repentant, and for a week or more something of the old horror returned, and he was once more on his

good behaviour. But in a little time came a relapse, and another repentance, and then a relapse again, and gradually the return of old habits and the flooding in of all his old way of life, with more violence and gloom, in proportion as the man was alarmed and exasperated by the remembrance of his despised, but terrible, warning.

With the old life returned the misery of the cottage. The smiles, which had begun to appear with the unwonted sunshine, were seen no more. Instead, returned to his poor wife's face the old pale and heartbroken look. The cottage lost its neat and cheerful air, and the melancholy of neglect was visible. Sometimes at night were overheard, by a chance passer-by, cries and sobs from that ill-omened dwelling. Tom Chuff was now often drunk, and not very often at home, except when he came in to sweep away his poor wife's earnings.

Tom had long lost sight of the honest old parson. There was shame mixed with his degradation. He had grace enough left when he saw the thin figure of "t' sir" walking along the road to turn out of his way and avoid meeting him. The clergyman shook his head, and sometimes groaned, when his name was mentioned. His horror and regret were more for the poor wife than for the relapsed sinner, for her case was pitiable indeed.

Her brother, Jack Everton, coming over from Hexley, having heard stories of all this, determined to beat Tom, for his ill-treatment of his sister, within an inch of his life. Luckily, perhaps, for all concerned, Tom happened to be away upon one of his long excursions, and poor Nell besought her brother, in extremity of terror, not to interpose between them. So he took his leave and went home muttering and sulky.

Now it happened a few months later that Nelly Chuff fell sick. She had been ailing, as heartbroken people do, for a good while. But now the end had come.

There was a coroner's inquest when she died, for the doctor had doubts as to whether a blow had not, at least, hastened her death. Nothing certain, however, came of the inquiry. Tom Chuff had left his home more than two days before his wife's death. He was absent upon his lawless business still when the coroner had held his quest.

Jack Everton came over from Hexley to attend the dismal obsequies of his sister. He was more incensed than ever with the wicked husband, who, one way or other, had hastened Nelly's death. The inquest had closed early in the day. The husband had not appeared.

An occasional companion — perhaps I ought to say accomplice — of Chuff's happened to turn up. He had left him on the borders of Westmoreland, and said he would probably be home next day. But Everton affected not to believe it. Perhaps it was to Tom Chuff, he suggested, a secret satisfaction to crown the history of his bad married life with the scandal of his absence from the funeral of his neglected and abused wife.

Everton had taken on himself the direction of the melancholy preparations. He had ordered a grave to be opened for his sister beside her mother's, in Shackleton churchyard, at the other side of the moor. For the purpose, as I have said, of marking the callous neglect of her husband, he determined that the funeral should take place that night. His brother Dick had accompanied him, and they and his sister, with Mary and the children, and a couple of the neighbours, formed the humble cortège.

Jack Everton said he would wait behind, on the chance of Tom Chuff coming in time, that he might tell him what had happened, and make him cross the moor with him to meet the funeral. His real object, I think, was to inflict upon the villain the drubbing he had so long wished to give him. Anyhow, he was resolved, by crossing the moor, to reach the churchyard in time to anticipate the arrival of the funeral, and to have a few words with the vicar, clerk, and sexton, all old friends of his, for the parish of Shackleton was the place of his birth and early recollections.

But Tom Chuff did not appear at his house that night. In surly mood, and without a shilling in his pocket, he was making his way homeward. His bottle of gin, his last investment, half emptied, with its neck protruding, as usual on such returns, was in his coatpocket.

His way home lay across the moor of Catsteane, and the point at which he best knew the passage was from the churchyard of Shackleton. He vaulted the low wall that forms its boundary, and strode across the graves, and over many a flat, half-buried tombstone, toward the side of the churchyard next Catsteane Moor.

The old church of Shackleton and its tower rose, close at his right, like a black shadow against the sky. It was a moonless night, but clear. By this time he had reached the low boundary wall, at the other side, that overlooks the wide expanse of Catsteane Moor. He stood by one of the huge old beech-trees, and leaned his back to its smooth trunk. Had he ever seen the sky look so black, and the stars shine out and blink so vividly? There was a deathlike silence over the scene, like the hush that precedes thunder in sultry weather. The expanse before him was lost in utter blackness. A strange quaking unnerved his heart. It was the sky and scenery of his vision! The same horror and misgiving. The same invincible fear of venturing from the spot where he stood. He would have prayed if he dared. His sinking heart demanded a restorative of some sort, and he grasped the bottle in his coatpocket. Turning to his left, as he did so, he saw the piled-up mould of an open grave that gaped with its head close to the base of the great tree against which he was leaning.

He stood aghast. His dream was returning and slowly enveloping him. Everything he saw was weaving itself into the texture of his vision. The chill of horror stole over him.

A faint whistle came shrill and clear over the moor, and he saw a figure approaching at a swinging trot, with a zig-zag course, hopping now here and now there, as men do over a surface where one has need to choose their steps. Through the jungle of reeds and bulrushes in the foreground this figure advanced; and with the same unaccountable impulse that had coerced him in his dream, he answered the whistle of the advancing figure.

On that signal it directed its course straight toward him. It mounted the low wall, and, standing there, looked into the graveyard.

"Who med answer?" challenged the newcomer from his post of observation.

"Me," answered Tom.

"Who are you?" repeated the man upon the wall.

"Tom Chuff; and who's this grave cut for?" He answered in a savage tone, to cover the secret shudder of his panic.

"I'll tell you that, ye villain!" answered the stranger, descending from the wall, "I a' looked for you far and near, and waited long, and now you're found at last."

Not knowing what to make of the figure that advanced upon him, Tom Chuff recoiled, stumbled, and fell backward into the open grave. He caught at the sides as he fell, but without retarding his fall.

An hour later, when lights came with the coffin, the corpse of Tom Chuff was found at the bottom of the grave. He had fallen direct upon his head, and his neck was broken. His death must have been simultaneous with his fall. Thus far his dream was accomplished.

It was his brother-in-law who had crossed the moor and approached the churchyard of Shackleton, exactly in the line which the image of his father had seemed to take in his strange vision. Fortunately for Jack Everton, the sexton and clerk of Shackleton church were, unseen by him, crossing the churchyard toward the grave of Nelly Chuff, just as Tom the poacher stumbled and fell. Suspicion of direct violence would otherwise have inevitably attached to the exasperated brother. As it was, the catastrophe was followed by no legal consequences.

The good vicar kept his word, and the grave of Tom Chuff is still pointed out by the old inhabitants of Shackleton pretty nearly in the centre of the churchyard. This conscientious compliance with the entreaty of the panic-stricken man as to the place of his sepulture gave a horrible and mocking emphasis to the strange combination by which fate had defeated his precaution, and fixed the place of his death.

The story was for many a year, and we believe still is, told round many a cottage hearth, and though it appeals to what many would term superstition, it yet sounded, in the ears of a rude and simple audience, a thrilling, and let us hope, not altogether fruitless homily.

DICKON THE DEVIL

About thirty years ago I was selected by two rich old maids to visit a property in that part of Lancashire which lies near the famous forest of Pendle, with which Mr. Ainsworth's "Lancashire Witches" has made us so pleasantly familiar. My business was to make partition of a small property, including a house and demesne, to which they had a long time before succeeded as co-heiresses.

The last forty miles of my journey I was obliged to post, chiefly by cross-roads, little known, and less frequented, and presenting scenery often extremely interesting and pretty. The picturesqueness of the landscape was enhanced by the season, the beginning of September, at which I was travelling.

I had never been in this part of the world before; I am told it is now a great deal less wild, and, consequently, less beautiful.

At the inn where I had stopped for a relay of horses and some dinner — for it was then past five o'clock — I found the host, a hale old fellow of five-and-sixty, as he told me, a man of easy and garrulous benevolence, willing to accommodate his guests with any amount of talk, which the slightest tap sufficed to set flowing, on any subject you pleased.

I was curious to learn something about Barwyke, which was the name of the demesne and house I was going to. As there was no inn within some miles of it, I had written to the steward to put me up there, the best way he could, for a night.

The host of the "Three Nuns," which was the sign under which he entertained wayfarers, had not a great deal to tell. It was twenty years, or more, since old Squire Bowes died, and no one had lived in the Hall ever since, except the gardener and his wife.

"Tom Wyndsour will be as old a man as myself; but he's a bit taller, and not so much in flesh, quite," said the fat innkeeper.

"But there were stories about the house," I repeated, "that they said, prevented tenants from coming into it?"

"Old wives' tales; many years ago, that will be, sir; I forget 'em; I forget 'em all. Oh yes, there always will be, when a house is left so; foolish folk will always be talkin'; but I hadn't heard a word about it this twenty year."

It was vain trying to pump him; the old landlord of the "Three Nuns," for some reason, did not choose to tell tales of Barwyke Hall, if he really did, as I suspected, remember them.

I paid my reckoning, and resumed my journey, well pleased with the good cheer of that old-world inn, but a little disappointed.

We had been driving for more than an hour, when we began to cross a wild common; and I knew that, this passed, a quarter of an hour would bring me to the door of Barwyke Hall.

The peat and furze were pretty soon left behind; we were again in the wooded scenery that I enjoyed so much, so entirely natural and pretty, and so little disturbed by traffic of any kind. I was looking from the chaise-window, and soon detected the object of which, for some time, my eye had been in search. Barwyke Hall was a large, quaint house, of that cagework fashion known as "black-and-white," in which the bars and angles of an oak framework contrast, black as ebony, with the white plaster that overspreads the masonry built into its interstices. This steep-roofed Elizabethan house stood in the midst of parklike grounds of no great extent, but rendered imposing by the noble stature of the old trees that now cast their lengthening shadows eastward over the sward, from the declining sun.

The park-wall was grey with age, and in many places laden with ivy. In deep grey shadow, that contrasted with the dim fires of evening reflected on the foliage above it, in a gentle hollow, stretched a lake that looked cold and black, and seemed, as it were, to skulk from observation with a guilty knowledge.

I had forgot that there was a lake at Barwyke; but the moment this caught my eye, like the cold polish of a snake in the shadow, my instinct seemed to recognize something dangerous, and I knew that the lake was connected, I could not remember how, with the story I had heard of this place in my boyhood.

I drove up a grass-grown avenue, under the boughs of these noble trees, whose foliage, dyed in autumnal red and yellow, returned the beams of the western sun gorgeously.

We drew up at the door. I got out, and had a good look at the front of the house; it was a large and melancholy mansion, with signs of long neglect upon it; great wooden shutters, in the old fashion, were barred, outside, across the windows; grass, and even nettles, were growing thick on the courtyard, and a thin moss streaked the timber beams; the plaster was discoloured by time and weather, and bore great russet and yellow stains. The gloom was increased by several grand old trees that crowded close about the house.

I mounted the steps, and looked round; the dark lake lay near me now, a little to the left. It was not large; it may have covered some ten or twelve acres; but it added to the melancholy of the scene. Near the centre of it was a small island, with two old ash trees, leaning toward each other, their pensive images reflected in the stirless water. The only cheery influence in this scene of antiquity, solitude, and neglect was that the house and landscape were warmed with the ruddy western beams. I knocked, and my summons resounded hollow and ungenial in my ear; and the bell, from far away, returned a deep-mouthed and surly ring, as if it resented being roused from a score years' slumber.

A light-limbed, jolly-looking old fellow, in a barracan jacket and gaiters, with a smile of welcome, and a very sharp, red nose, that seemed to promise good cheer, opened the door with a promptitude that indicated a hospitable expectation of my arrival.

There was but little light in the hall, and that little lost itself in darkness in the background. It was very spacious and lofty, with a gallery running round it, which, when the door was open, was visible at two or three points. Almost in the dark my new acquaintance led me across this wide hall into the room destined for my reception. It was spacious, and wainscoted up to the ceiling. The furniture of this capacious chamber was oldfashioned and clumsy. There were curtains still to the windows, and a piece of Turkey carpet lay upon the floor; those windows were two in number, looking out, through the trunks of the trees close to the house, upon the lake. It needed all the fire, and all the pleasant associations of my entertainer's red nose, to light up this melancholy chamber. A door at its farther end admitted to the room that was prepared for my sleeping apartment. It was

wainscoted, like the other. It had a four-post bed, with heavy tapestry curtains, and in other respects was furnished in the same old-world and ponderous style as the other room. Its window, like those of that apartment, looked out upon the lake.

Sombre and sad as these rooms were, they were yet scrupulously clean. I had nothing to complain of; but the effect was rather dispiriting. Having given some directions about supper — a pleasant incident to look forward to — and made a rapid toilet, I called on my friend with the gaiters and red nose (Tom Wyndsour) whose occupation was that of a “bailiff,” or under-steward, of the property, to accompany me, as we had still an hour or so of sun and twilight, in a walk over the grounds.

It was a sweet autumn evening, and my guide, a hardy old fellow, strode at a pace that tasked me to keep up with.

Among clumps of trees at the northern boundary of the demesne we lighted upon the little antique parish church. I was looking down upon it, from an eminence, and the park-wall interposed; but a little way down was a stile affording access to the road, and by this we approached the iron gate of the churchyard. I saw the church door open; the sexton was replacing his pick, shovel, and spade, with which he had just been digging a grave in the churchyard, in their little repository under the stone stair of the tower. He was a polite, shrewd little hunchback, who was very happy to show me over the church. Among the monuments was one that interested me; it was erected to commemorate the very Squire Bowes from whom my two old maids had inherited the house and estate of Barwyke. It spoke of him in terms of grandiloquent eulogy, and informed the Christian reader that he had died, in the bosom of the Church of England, at the age of seventy-one.

I read this inscription by the parting beams of the setting sun, which disappeared behind the horizon just as we passed out from under the porch.

“Twenty years since the Squire died,” said I, reflecting as I loitered still in the churchyard.

“Ay, sir; ‘twill be twenty year the ninth o’ last month.”

“And a very good old gentleman?”

“Goodnatured enough, and an easy gentleman he was, sir; I don’t think while he lived he ever hurt a fly,” acquiesced Tom Wyndsour. “It ain’t always easy sayin’ what’s in ‘em though, and what they may take or turn to afterwards; and some o’ them sort, I think, goes mad.”

“You don’t think he was out of his mind?” I asked.

“He? La! no; not he, sir; a bit lazy, mayhap, like other old fellows; but a knew devilish well what he was about.”

Tom Wyndsour’s account was a little enigmatical; but, like old Squire Bowes, I was “a bit lazy” that evening, and asked no more questions about him.

We got over the stile upon the narrow road that skirts the churchyard. It is overhung by elms more than a hundred years old, and in the twilight, which now prevailed, was growing very dark. As side-by-side we walked along this road, hemmed in by two loose stone-like walls, something running towards us in a zig-zag line passed us at a wild pace, with a sound like a frightened laugh or a shudder, and I saw, as it passed, that it was a human figure. I may confess now, that I was a little startled. The dress of this figure was, in part, white: I know I mistook it at first for a white horse coming down the road at a gallop. Tom Wyndsour turned about and looked after the retreating figure.

“He’ll be on his travels tonight,” he said, in a low tone. “Easy served with a bed, *that* lad be; six foot o’ dry peat or heath, or a nook in a dry ditch. That lad hasn’t slept once in a house this twenty year, and never will while grass grows.”

“Is he mad?” I asked.

“Something that way, sir; he’s an idiot, an awpy; we call him ‘Dickon the devil,’ because the devil’s almost the only word that’s ever in his mouth.”

It struck me that this idiot was in some way connected with the story of old Squire Bowes.

“Queer things are told of him, I dare say?” I suggested.

“More or less, sir; more or less. Queer stories, some.”

“Twenty years since he slept in a house? That’s about the time the Squire died,” I continued.

“So it will be, sir; and not very long after.”

“You must tell me all about that, Tom, tonight, when I can hear it comfortably, after supper.”

Tom did not seem to like my invitation; and looking straight before him as we trudged on, he said,

“You see, sir, the house has been quiet, and nout’s been troubling folk inside the walls or out, all round the woods of Barwyke, this ten year, or more; and my old woman, down there, is clear against talking about such matters, and thinks it best — and so do I — to let sleepin’ dogs be.”

He dropped his voice towards the close of the sentence, and nodded significantly.

We soon reached a point where he unlocked a wicket in the park wall, by which we entered the grounds of Barwyke once more.

The twilight deepening over the landscape, the huge and solemn trees, and the distant outline of the haunted house, exercised a sombre influence on me, which, together with the fatigue of a day of travel, and the brisk walk we had had, disinclined me to interrupt the silence in which my companion now indulged.

A certain air of comparative comfort, on our arrival, in great measure dissipated the gloom that was stealing over me. Although it was by no means a cold night, I was very glad to see some wood blazing in the grate; and a pair of candles aiding the light of the fire, made the room look cheerful. A small table, with a very white cloth, and preparations for supper, was also a very agreeable object.

I should have liked very well, under these influences, to have listened to Tom Wyndsour’s story; but after supper I grew too sleepy to attempt to lead him to the subject; and after yawning for a time, I found there was no use in contending against my drowsiness, so I betook myself to my bedroom, and by ten o’clock was fast asleep.

What interruption I experienced that night I shall tell you presently. It was not much, but it was very odd.

By next night I had completed my work at Barwyke. From early morning till then I was so incessantly occupied and hard-worked, that I had not time to think over the singular occurrence to which I have just referred. Behold me, however, at length once more seated at my little supper-table, having ended a comfortable meal. It had been a sultry day, and I had thrown one of the large windows up as high as it would go. I was sitting near it, with my brandy and water at my elbow, looking out into the dark.

There was no moon, and the trees that are grouped about the house make the darkness round it supernaturally profound on such nights.

"Tom," said I, so soon as the jug of hot punch I had supplied him with began to exercise its genial and communicative influence; "you must tell me who beside your wife and you and myself slept in the house last night."

Tom, sitting near the door, set down his tumbler, and looked at me askance, while you might count seven, without speaking a word.

"Who else slept in the house?" he repeated, very deliberately. "Not a living soul, sir"; and he looked hard at me, still evidently expecting something more.

"That is very odd," I said returning his stare, and feeling really a little odd. "You are sure *you* were not in my room last night?"

"Not till I came to call you, sir, this morning; *I* can make oath of that."

"Well," said I, "there was some one there, *I* can make oath of that. I was so tired I could not make up my mind to get up; but I was waked by a sound that I thought was some one flinging down the two tin boxes in which my papers were locked up violently on the floor. I heard a slow step on the ground, and there was light in the room, although I remembered having put out my candle. I thought it must have been you, who had come in for my clothes, and upset the boxes by accident. Whoever it was, he went out and the light with him. I was about to settle again, when, the curtain being a little open at the foot of the bed, I saw a light on the wall opposite; such as a candle from outside would cast if the door were very cautiously opening. I started up in the bed, drew the side curtain, and saw that the door *was* opening, and admitting light from outside. It is close, you know, to the head of the bed. A hand was holding on the edge of the door and pushing it open; not a bit like yours; a very singular hand. Let me look at yours."

He extended it for my inspection.

"Oh no; there's nothing wrong with your hand. This was differently shaped; fatter; and the middle finger was stunted, and shorter than the rest, looking as if it had once been broken, and the nail was crooked like a claw. I called out 'Who's there?' and the light and the hand were withdrawn, and I saw and heard no more of my visitor."

"So sure as you're a living man, that was him!" exclaimed Tom Wyndsour, his very nose growing pale, and his eyes almost starting out of his head.

"Who?" I asked.

"Old Squire Bowes; 'twas *his* hand you saw; the Lord a' mercy on us!" answered Tom. "The broken finger, and the nail bent like a hoop. Well for you, sir, he didn't come back when you called, that time. You came here about them Miss Dymock's business, and he never meant they should have a foot o' ground in Barwyke; and he was making a will to give it away quite different, when death took him short. He never was uncivil to no one; but he couldn't abide them ladies. My mind misgave me when I heard 'twas about their business you were coming; and now you see how it is; he'll be at his old tricks again!"

With some pressure and a little more punch, I induced Tom Wyndsour to explain his mysterious allusions by recounting the occurrences which followed the old Squire's death.

"Squire Bowes of Barwyke died without making a will, as you know," said Tom. "And all the folk round were sorry; that is to say, sir, as sorry as folk will be for an old man that has seen a long tale of years, and has no right to grumble that death has knocked an hour too soon at his door. The Squire was well liked; he was never in a passion, or said a hard word; and he would not hurt a fly; and that made what happened after his decease the more surprising.

"The first thing these ladies did, when they got the property, was to buy stock for the park.

"It was not wise, in any case, to graze the land on their own account. But they little knew all they had to contend with.

"Before long something went wrong with the cattle; first one, and then another, took sick and died, and so on, till the loss began to grow heavy. Then, queer stories, little by little, began to be told. It was said, first by one, then by another, that Squire Bowes was seen, about evening time, walking, just as he used to do when he was alive, among the old trees, leaning on his stick; and, sometimes when he came up with the cattle, he would stop and lay his hand kindly like on the back of one of them; and that one was sure to fall sick next day, and die soon after.

"No one ever met him in the park, or in the woods, or ever saw him, except a good distance off. But they knew his gait and his figure well, and the clothes he used to wear; and they could tell the beast he laid his hand on by its colour — white, dun, or black; and that beast was sure to sicken and die. The neighbours grew shy of taking the path over the park; and no one liked to walk in the woods, or come inside the bounds of Barwyke: and the cattle went on sickening and dying as before.

"At that time there was one Thomas Pyke; he had been a groom to the old Squire; and he was in care of the place, and was the only one that used to sleep in the house.

"Tom was vexed, hearing these stories; which he did not believe the half on 'em; and more especial as he could not get man or boy to herd the cattle; all being afeared. So he wrote to Matlock in Derbyshire, for his brother, Richard Pyke, a clever lad, and one that knew nout o' the story of the old Squire walking.

"Dick came; and the cattle was better; folk said they could still see the old Squire, sometimes, walking, as before, in openings of the wood, with his stick in his hand; but he was shy of coming nigh the cattle, whatever his reason might be, since Dickon Pyke came; and he used to stand a long bit off, looking at them, with no more stir in him than a trunk o' one of the old trees, for an hour at a time, till the shape melted away, little by little, like the smoke of a fire that burns out.

"Tom Pyke and his brother Dickon, being the only living souls in the house, lay in the big bed in the servants' room, the house being fast barred and locked, one night in November.

"Tom was lying next the wall, and he told me, as wide awake as ever he was at noonday. His brother Dickon lay outside, and was sound asleep.

"Well, as Tom lay thinking, with his eyes turned toward the door, it opens slowly, and who should come in but old Squire Bowes, his face lookin' as dead as he was in his coffin.

"Tom's very breath left his body; he could not take his eyes off him; and he felt the hair rising up on his head.

"The Squire came to the side of the bed, and put his arms under Dickon, and lifted the boy — in a dead sleep all the time — and carried him out so, at the door.

"Such was the appearance, to Tom Pyke's eyes, and he was ready to swear to it, anywhere.

"When this happened, the light, wherever it came from, all on a sudden went out, and Tom could not see his own hand before him.

"More dead than alive, he lay till daylight.

"Sure enough his brother Dickon was gone. No sign of him could he discover about the house; and with some trouble he got a couple of the neighbours to help him to search the woods and grounds. Not a sign of him anywhere.

"At last one of them thought of the island in the lake; the little boat was moored to the old post at the water's edge. In they got, though with small hope of finding him there. Find him, nevertheless, they did, sitting under the big ash tree, quite out of his wits; and to all their questions he answered nothing but one cry— 'Bowes, the devil! See him; see him; Bowes, the devil!' An idiot they found him; and so he will be till God sets all things right. No one could ever get him to sleep under roof-tree more. He wanders from house to house while daylight lasts; and no one cares to lock the harmless creature in the workhouse. And folk would rather not meet him after nightfall, for they think where he is there may be worse things near."

A silence followed Tom's story. He and I were alone in that large room; I was sitting near the open window, looking into the dark night air. I fancied I saw something white move across it; and I heard a sound like low talking that swelled into a discordant shriek— "Hoo-oo-oo! Bowes, the devil! Over your shoulder. Hoo-oo-oo! ha! ha! ha!" I started up, and saw, by the light of the candle with which Tom strode to the window, the wild eyes and blighted face of the idiot, as, with a sudden change of mood, he drew off, whispering and tittering to himself, and holding up his long fingers, and looking at the tips like a "hand of glory."

Tom pulled down the window. The story and its epilogue were over. I confess I was rather glad when I heard the sound of the horses' hoofs on the courtyard, a few minutes later; and still gladder when, having bidden Tom a kind farewell, I had left the neglected house of Barwyke a mile behind me.

A DEBT OF HONOUR.

A GHOST STORY.

HUSH! what was that cry, so low but yet so piercing, so strange but yet so sorrowful? It was not the marmot upon the side of the Righi — it was not the heron down by the lake; no, it was distinctively human. Hush! there it is again — from the churchyard which I have just left!

Not ten minutes have elapsed since I was sitting on the low wall of the churchyard of Weggis, watching the calm glories of the moonlight illuminating with silver splendor the lake of Lucerne; and I am certain there was no one within the inclosure but myself.

I am mistaken, surely. What a silence there is upon the night! Not a breath of air now to break up into a thousand brilliant ripples the long reflection of the August moon, or to stir the foliage of the chestnuts; not a voice in the village; no splash of oar upon the lake. All life seems at perfect rest, and the solemn stillness that reigns about the topmost glaciers of S. Gothard has spread its mantle over the warmer world below.

I must not linger; as it is, I shall have to wake up the porter to let me into the hotel. I hurry on.

Not ten paces, though. Again I hear the cry. This time it sounds to me like the long, sad sob of a wearied and broken heart. Without staying to reason with myself, I quickly retrace my steps.

I stumble about among the iron crosses and the graves, and displace in my confusion wreaths of immortelles and fresher flowers. A huge mausoleum stands between me and the wall upon which I had been sitting not a quarter of an hour ago. The mausoleum casts a deep shadow upon the side nearest to me. Ah! something is stirring there. I strain my eyes — the figure of a man passes slowly out of the shade, and silently occupies my place upon the wall. It must have been his lips that gave out that miserable sound.

What shall I do? Compassion and curiosity are strong. The man whose heart can be rent so sorely ought not to be allowed to linger here with his despair. He is gazing, as I did, upon the lake. I mark his profile — clear-cut and symmetrical; I catch the lustre of large eyes. The face, as I can see it, seems very still and placid. I may be mistaken; he may merely be a wanderer like myself; perhaps he heard the three strange cries, and has also come to seek the cause. I feel impelled to speak to him.

I pass from the path by the church to the east side of the mausoleum, and so come toward him, the moon full upon his features. Great heaven! how pale his face is!

“Good-evening, sir. I thought myself alone here, and wondered that no other travellers had found their way to this lovely spot. Charming, is it not?”

For a moment he says nothing, but his eyes are full upon me. At last he replies:

“It is charming, as you say, Mr. Reginald Westcar.”

“You know me?” I exclaim, in astonishment.

“Pardon me, I can scarcely claim a personal acquaintance. But yours is the only English name entered to-day in the *Livre des Étrangers*.”

“You are staying at the Hôtel de la Concorde, then?”

An inclination of the head is all the answer vouchsafed.

“May I ask,” I continue, “whether you heard just now a very strange cry repeated three times?”

A pause. The lustrous eyes seem to search me through and through — I can hardly bear their gaze. Then he replies.

“I fancy I heard the echoes of some such sounds as you describe.”

The *echoes*! Is this, then, the man who gave utterance to those cries of woe! is it possible? The face seems so passionless; but the pallor of those features bears witness to some terrible agony within.

“I thought some one must be in distress,” I rejoin, hastily; “and I hurried back to see if I could be of any service.”

“Very good of you,” he answers, coldly; “but surely such a place as this is not unaccustomed to the voice of sorrow.”

“No doubt. My impulse was a mistaken one.”

“But kindly meant. You will not sleep less soundly for acting on that impulse, Reginald Westcar.”

He rises as he speaks. He throws his cloak round him, and stands motionless. I take the hint. My mysterious countryman wishes to be alone. Some one that he has loved and lost lies buried here.

“Goodnight, sir,” I say, as I move in the direction of the little chapel at the gate. “Neither of us will sleep the less soundly for thinking of the perfect repose that reigns around this place.”

“What do you mean?” he asks.

“The dead,” I reply, as I stretch my hand toward the graves. “Do you not remember the lines in ‘King Lear’?”

“‘After life’s fitful fever he sleeps well.’”

“But *you* have never died, Reginald Westcar. You know nothing of the sleep of death.”

For the third time he speaks my name almost familiarly, and — I know not why — a shudder passes through me. I have no time, in my turn, to ask him what he means; for he strides silently away into the shadow of the church, and I, with a strange sense of oppression upon me, returned to my hotel.

The events which I have just related passed in vivid recollection through my mind as I travelled northward one cold November day in the year 185 — . About six months previously I had taken my degree at Oxford, and had since been enjoying a trip upon the continent; and on my return to London I found a letter awaiting me from my lawyers, informing me somewhat to my astonishment, that I had succeeded to a small estate in Cumberland. I must tell you exactly how this came about. My mother was a Miss Ringwood, and she was the youngest of three children: the eldest was Aldina, the second was Geoffrey, and the third

(my mother) Alice. Their mother (who had been a widow since my mother's birth) lived at this little place in Cumberland, and which was known as The Shallows; she died shortly after my mother's marriage with my father, Captain Westcar. My aunt Aldina and my uncle Geoffrey — the one at that time aged twenty-eight, and the other twenty-six — continued to reside at The Shallows. My father and mother had to go to India, where I was born, and where, when quite a child, I was left an orphan. A few months after my mother's marriage my aunt disappeared; a few weeks after that event, and my uncle Geoffrey dropped down dead, as he was playing at cards with Mr. Maryon, the proprietor of a neighboring mansion known as The Mere. A fortnight after my uncle's death, my aunt Aldina returned to The Shallows, and never left it again till she was carried out in her coffin to her grave in the churchyard. Ever since her return from her mysterious disappearance she maintained an impenetrable reserve. As a schoolboy I visited her twice or thrice, but these visits depressed my youthful spirits to such an extent, that as I grew older I excused myself from accepting my aunt's not very pressing invitations; and at the time I am now speaking of I had not seen her for eight or ten years. I was rather surprised, therefore, when she bequeathed me The Shallows, which, as the surviving child, she inherited under her mother's marriage settlement.

But The Shallows had always exercised a grim influence over me, and the knowledge that I was now going to it as my home oppressed me. The road seemed unusually dark, cold, and lonely. At last I passed the lodge, and two hundred yards more brought me to the porch. Very soon the door was opened by an elderly female, whom I well remembered as having been my aunt's housekeeper and cook. I had pleasant recollections of her, and was glad to see her. To tell the truth, I had not anticipated my visit to my newly acquired property with any great degree of enthusiasm; but a very tolerable dinner had an inspiring effect, and I was pleased to learn that there was a bin of old Madeira in the cellar. Naturally I soon grew cheerful, and consequently talkative; and summoned Mrs. Balk for a little gossip. The substance of what I gathered from her rather diffusive conversation was as follows:

My aunt had resided at The Shallows ever since the death of my uncle Geoffrey, but she had maintained a silent and reserved habit; and Mrs. Balk was of opinion that she had had some great misfortune. She had persistently refused all intercourse with the people at The Mere. Squire Maryon, himself a cold and taciturn man, had once or twice showed a disposition to be friendly, but she had sternly repulsed all such overtures. Mrs. Balk was of opinion that Miss Ringwood was not "quite right," as she expressed it, on some topics; especially did she seem impressed with the idea that The Mere ought to belong to her. It appeared that the Ringwoods and Maryons were distant connections; that The Mere belonged in former times to a certain Sir Henry Benet; that he was a bachelor, and that Squire Maryon's father and old Mr. Ringwood were cousins of his, and that there was some doubt as to which was the real heir; that Sir Henry, who disliked old Maryon, had frequently said he had set any chance of dispute at rest, by bequeathing the Mere property by will to Mr. Ringwood, my mother's father; that, on his death, no such will could be found; and the family lawyers agreed that Mr. Maryon was the legal inheritor, and my uncle Geoffrey and his sisters must be content to take the Shallows, or nothing at all. Mr. Maryon was comparatively rich, and the Ringwoods poor, consequently they were advised not to enter upon a costly lawsuit. My aunt Aldina maintained to the last that Sir Henry had made a will, and that Mr. Maryon knew it, but had destroyed or suppressed the document. I did not gather from Mrs. Balk's narrative that Miss Ringwood had any foundation for her belief, and I dismissed the notion at once as baseless.

"And my uncle Geoffrey died of apoplexy, you say, Mrs. Balk?"

"I don't say so, sir, no more did Miss Ringwood; but *they* said so."

"Whom do you mean by *they*?"

"The people at The Mere — the young doctor, a friend of Squire Maryon's, who was brought over from York, and the rest; he fell heavily from his chair, and his head struck against the fender."

"Playing at cards with Mr. Maryon, I think you said."

"Yes, sir; he was too fond of cards, I believe, was Mr. Geoffrey."

"Is Mr. Maryon seen much in the county — is he hospitable?"

"Well, sir, he goes up to London a good deal, and has some friends down from town occasionally; but he does not seem to care much about the people in the neighborhood."

"He has some children, Mrs. Balk?"

"Only one daughter, sir; a sweet pretty thing she is. Her mother died when Miss Agnes was born."

"You have no idea, Mrs. Balk, what my aunt Aldina's great misfortune was?"

"Well, sir, I can't help thinking it must have been a love affair. She always hated men so much."

"Then why did she leave The Shallows to me, Mrs. Balk?"

"Ah, you are laughing, sir. No doubt she considered that The Mere ought to belong to you, as the heir of the Ringwoods, and she placed you here, as near as might be to the place."

"In hopes that I might marry Miss Maryon, eh, Mrs. Balk?"

"You are laughing again, sir. I don't imagine she thought so much of that, as of the possibility of your discovering something about the missing will."

I bade the communicative Mrs. Balk good night and retired to my bedroom — a low, wide, sombre, oak-panelled chamber. I must confess that family stories had no great interest for me, living apart from them at school and college as I had done; and as I undressed I thought more of the probabilities of sport the eight hundred acres of wild shooting belonging to The Shallows would afford me, than of the supposed will my poor aunt had evidently worried herself about so much. Thoroughly tired after my long journey, I soon fell fast asleep amid the deep shadows of the huge four-poster I mentally resolved to chop up into firewood at an early date, and substitute for it a more modern iron bedstead.

How long I had been asleep I do not know, but I suddenly started up, the echo of a long, sad cry ringing in my ears.

I listened eagerly — sensitive to the slightest sound — painfully sensitive as one is only in the deep silence of the night.

I heard the old-fashioned clock I had noticed on the stairs strike three. The reverberation seemed to last a long time, then all was silent again. "A dream," I muttered to myself, as I lay down upon the pillow; "Madeira is a heating wine. But what can I have been dreaming of?"

Sleep seemed to have gone altogether, and the busy mind wandered among the continental scenes I had lately visited. By and by I found myself in memory once more within the Weggis churchyard. I was satisfied; I had traced my dream to the cries that I had heard there. I turned round to sleep again. Perhaps I fell into a doze — I cannot say; but again I started up at the repetition, as it seemed outside my window, of that cry of sadness and despair. I hastily drew aside the heavy curtains of my bed — at that moment the room seemed to be illuminated with a dim, unearthly light — and I saw, gradually growing into human shape, the figure of a woman. I recognized in it my aunt, Miss Ringwood. Horror-struck, I gazed at the apparition; it advanced a little — the lips moved — I heard it distinctly say:

“Reginald Westcar, The Mere belongs to you. Compel John Maryon to pay the debt of honor!”

I fell back senseless.

When next I returned to consciousness, it was when I was called in the morning; the shutters were opened, and I saw the red light of the dawning winter sun.

There is a strange sympathy between the night and the mind. All one's troubles represent themselves as increased a hundredfold if one wakes in the night, and begins to think about them. A muscular pain becomes the certainty of an incurable internal disease; and a headache suggests incipient softening of the brain. But all these horrors are dissipated with the morning light, and the after-glow of a cold bath turns them into jokes. So it was with me on the morning after my arrival at The Shallows. I accounted most satisfactorily for all that had occurred, or seemed to have occurred, during the night; and resolved that, though the old Madeira was uncommonly good, I must be careful in future not to drink more than a couple of glasses after dinner. I need scarcely say that I said nothing to Mrs. Balk of my bad dreams, and shortly after breakfast I took my gun, and went out in search of such game as I might chance to meet with. At three o'clock I sent the keeper home, as his capacious pockets were pretty well filled, telling him that I thought I knew the country, and should stroll back leisurely. The gray gloom of the November evening was spreading over the sky as I came upon a small plantation which I believed belonged to me. I struck straight across it, emerging from its shadows, I found myself by a small stream and some marshy land; on the other side another small plantation. A snipe got up, I fired, and tailored it. I marked the bird into this other plantation, and followed. Up got a covey of partridges — bang, bang — one down by the side of an oak. I was about to enter this covert, when a lady and gentleman emerged, and, struck with the unpleasant thought that I was possibly trespassing, I at once went forward to apologize.

Before I could say a word, the gentleman addressed me.

“May I ask, sir, if I have given you permission to shoot over my preserves?”

“I beg to express my great regret, sir,” I replied, as I lifted my hat in acknowledgment of the lady's presence, “that I should have trespassed upon your land. I can only plead, as my excuse, that I fully believed I was still upon the manor belonging to The Shallows.”

“Gentlemen who go out shooting ought to know the limits of their estates,” he answered harshly; “the boundaries of The Shallows are well defined, nor is the area they contain so very extensive. You have no right upon this side the stream, sir; oblige me by returning.”

I merely bowed, for I was nettled by his tone, and as I turned away I noticed that the young lady whispered to him.

“One moment, sir,” he said, “my daughter suggests the possibility of your being the new owner of The Shallows. May I ask if this is so?”

It had not occurred to me before, but I understood in a moment to whom I had been speaking, and I replied:

“Yes, Mr. Maryon — my name is Westcar.”

Such was my introduction to Mr. and Miss Maryon. The proprietor of The Mere appeared to be a gentleman, but his manners were cold and reserved, and a careful observer might have remarked a perpetual restlessness in the eyes, as if they were physically incapable of regarding the same object for more than a moment. He was about sixty years of age, apparently; and though he now and again made an effort to carry himself upright, the head and shoulders soon drooped again, as if the weight of years, and, it might be, the memory of the past, were a heavy load to carry. Of Miss Maryon it is sufficient to say that she was nineteen or twenty, and it did not need a second glance to satisfy me that her beauty was of no ordinary kind.

I must hurry over the records of the next few weeks. I became a frequent visitor at The Mere. Mr. Maryon's manner never became cordial, but he did not seem displeased to see me; and as to Agnes, — well, she certainly was not displeased either.

I think it was on Christmas Day that I suddenly discovered that I was desperately in love. Miss Maryon had been for two or three days confined to her room by a bad cold, and I found myself in a great state of anxiety to see her again. I am sorry to say that my thoughts wandered a good deal when I was at church upon that festival, and I could not help thinking what ample room there was for a bridal procession up the spacious aisle. Suddenly my eyes rested upon a mural tablet, inscribed, “To the memory of Aldina Ringwood.” Then with a cold thrill there came back upon me what I had almost forgotten, the dream, or whatever it was, that had occurred on that first night at The Shallows; and those strange words — “The Mere belongs to you. Compel John Maryon to pay the debt of honor!” Nothing but the remembrance of Agnes' sweet face availed for the time to banish the vision, the statement, and the bidding.

Miss Maryon was soon downstairs again. Did I flatter myself too much in thinking that she was as glad to see me as I was to see her? No — I felt sure that I did not. Then I began to reflect seriously upon my position. My fortune was small, quite enough for me, but not enough for two; and as she was heiress of The Mere and a comfortable rent-roll of some six or eight thousand a year, was it not natural that Mr. Maryon expected her to make what is called a “good match”? Still, I could not conceal from myself the fact, that he evinced no objection whatever to my frequent visits at his house, nor to my taking walks with his daughter when he was unable to accompany us.

One bright, frosty day I had been down to the lake with Miss Maryon, and had enjoyed the privilege of teaching her to skate; and on returning to the house, we met Mr. Maryon upon the terrace. He walked with us to the conservatory; we went in to examine the plants, and he remained outside, pacing up and down the terrace. Both Agnes and myself were strangely silent; perhaps my tongue had found an eloquence upon the ice which was well met by a shy thoughtfulness upon her part. But there was a lovely color upon her cheeks, and I experienced a very considerable and unusual fluttering about my heart. It happened as

we were standing at the door of the conservatory, both of us silently looking away from the flowers upon the frosty view, that our eyes lighted at the same time upon Mr. Maryon. He, too, was apparently regarding the prospect, when suddenly he paused and staggered back, as if something unexpected met his gaze.

"Oh, poor papa! I hope he is not going to have one of his fits!" exclaimed Agnes.

"Fits! Is he subject to such attacks?" I inquired.

"Not ordinary fits," she answered hurriedly; "I hardly know how to explain them. They come upon him occasionally, and generally at this period of the year."

"Shall we go to him?" I suggested.

"No; you cannot help him; and he cannot bear that they should be noticed."

We both watched him. His arms were stretched up above his head, and again he recoiled a step or two. I sought for an explanation in Agnes' face.

"A stranger!" she exclaimed. "Who can it be?"

I looked toward Mr. Maryon. A tall figure of a man had come from the farther side of the house; he wore a large, loose coat and a kind of military cap upon his head.

"Doubtless you are surprised to see me, John," we heard the newcomer say, in a confident voice, "but I am not the devil, man, that you should greet me with such a peculiar attitude." He held out his hand, and continued, "Come, don't let the warmth of old fellowship be all on one side, this wintry day."

We could see that Mr. Maryon took the proffered right hand with his left for an instant, then seemed to shrink away, but exchanged no word of this greeting.

"I don't understand this," said Agnes, and we both hurried forward. The stranger, seeing Agnes approach, lifted his cap.

"Ah, your daughter, John, no doubt. I see the likeness to her lamented mother. Pray introduce me."

Mr. Maryon's usually pallid features had assumed a still paler hue, and he said in a low voice:

"Colonel Bludyer — my daughter." Agnes barely bowed.

"Charmed to renew your acquaintance, Miss Maryon. When last I saw you, you were quite a baby; but your father and I are very old friends — are we not, John?"

Mr. Maryon vaguely nodded his head.

"Well, John, you have often pressed your hospitality upon me, but till now I have never had an opportunity of availing myself of your kind offers; so I have brought my bag, and intend at last to give you the pleasure of my company for a few days."

I certainly should have thought that a man of Mr. Maryon's disposition would have resented such conduct as this, or, at all events, have given this self-invited guest a chilling welcome. Mr. Maryon, however, in a confused and somewhat stammering tone, said that he was glad Colonel Bludyer had come at last, and bade his daughter go and make the necessary arrangements. Agnes, in silent astonishment, entered the house, and then Mr. Maryon turned to me hastily and bade me good-by. In a by no means comfortable frame of mind I returned to The Shallows.

The sudden advent of this miscellaneous colonel was naturally somewhat irritating to me. Not only did I regard the man as an intolerable bore, but I could not help fancying that he was something more than an old friend of Mr. Maryon's; in fact, I was led to judge, by Mr. Maryon's strange conduct, that this Bludyer had some power over him which might be exercised to the detriment of the Maryon family, and I was convinced there was some mystery it was my business to penetrate.

The following day I went up to The Mere to see if Miss Maryon was desirous of renewing her skating lesson. I found the party in the billiard-room, Agnes marking for her father and the Colonel. Mr. Maryon, whom I knew to be an exceptionally good player, seemed incapable of making a decent stroke; the Colonel, on the other hand, could evidently give a professional fifteen, and beat him easily. We all went down to the lake together. I had no chance of any quiet conversation with Agnes; the Colonel was perpetually beside us.

I returned home disgusted. For two whole days I did not go near The Mere. On the third day I went up, hoping that the horrid Colonel would be gone. It was beginning to snow when I left The Shallows at about two o'clock in the afternoon, and Mrs. Balk foretold a heavy storm, and bade me not be late returning.

The black winter darkness in the sky deepened as I approached The Mere. I was ushered again into the billiard-room. Agnes was marking, as upon the previous occasion, but two days had worked a sad difference in her face. Mr. Maryon hardly noticed my entrance; he was flushed, and playing eagerly; the Colonel was boisterous, declaring that John had never played better twenty years ago. I relieved Agnes of the duty of marking. The snow fell in a thick layer upon the skylight, and the Colonel became seriously anxious about my return home. As I did not think he was the proper person to give me hints, I resolutely remained where I was, encouraged in my behavior by the few words I gained from Agnes, and by the looks of entreaty she gave me. I had always considered Mr. Maryon to be an abstemious man, but he drank a good deal of brandy and soda during the long game of seven hundred up, and when he succeeded in beating the Colonel by forty-three, he was in roaring spirits, and insisted upon my staying to dinner. Need I say that I accepted the invitation?

I made such toilet as I could in a most unattainable chamber that was allotted to me, and hurried back to the drawingroom in the hope that I might get a few private words with Agnes. I was not disappointed. She, too, had hurried down, and in a few words I learned that this abominable Bludyer was paying her his coarse attentions, and with, apparently, the full consent of Mr. Maryon. My indignation was unbounded. Was it possible that Mr. Maryon intended to sacrifice this fair creature to that repulsive man?

Mr. Maryon had appeared in excellent spirits when dinner began, and the first glass or two of champagne made him merrier than I thought it possible for him to be. But by the time the dessert was on the table he had grown silent and thoughtful; nor did he respond to the warm eulogiums the Colonel passed upon the magnum of claret which was set before us.

After dinner we sat in the library. The Colonel left the room to fetch some cigars he had been loudly extolling. Then Agnes had an opportunity of whispering to me.

"Look at papa — see how strangely he sits — his hands clenching the arms of the chair, his eyes fixed upon the blazing coals! How old he seems to be tonight! His terrible fits are coming on — he is always like this toward the end of January!" The

Colonel's return put an end to any further confidential talk.

When we separated for the night, I felt that my going to bed would be purposeless. I felt most painfully wide awake. I threw myself down upon my bed, and worried myself by trying to imagine what secret there could be between Maryon and Bludyer — for that a secret of some kind existed, I felt certain. I tossed about till I heard the stroke of one. A dreadful restlessness had come upon me. It seemed as if the solemn night-side of life was busy waking now, but the silence and solitude of my antique chamber became too much for me. I rose from my bed, and paced up and down the room. I raked up the dying embers of the fire, and drew an armchair to the hearth. I fell into a doze. By and by I woke up suddenly, and I was conscious of stealthy footsteps in the passage. My sense of hearing became painfully acute. I heard the footsteps retreating down the corridor, until they were lost in the distance. I cautiously opened the door, and, shading the candle with my hand, looked out — there was nothing to be seen; but I felt that I could not remain quietly in my room, and, closing the door behind me, I went out in search of I knew not what.

The sitting-rooms and bedrooms in ordinary use at The Mere were in the modern part of the house; but there was an old Elizabethan wing which I had often longed to explore, and in this strange ramble of mine I soon had reason to be satisfied that I was well within it. At the end of an oak-panelled narrow passage a door stood open, and I entered a low, sombre apartment fitted with furniture in the style of two hundred years ago. There was something awfully ghostly about the look of this room. A great four-post bedstead, with heavy hangings, stood in a deep recess; a round oak table and two high-backed chairs were in the centre of the room. Suddenly, as I gazed on these things, I heard stealthy footsteps in the passage, and saw a dim light advancing. Acting on a sudden impulse, I extinguished my candle and withdrew into the shadow of the recess, watching eagerly. The footsteps came nearer. My heart seemed to stand still with expectation. They paused outside the door, for a moment really — for an age it seemed to me. Then, to my astonishment, I saw Mr. Maryon enter. He carried a small night-lamp in his hand. Another glance satisfied me that he was walking in his sleep. He came straight to the round table, and set down the lamp. He seated himself in one of the high-backed chairs, his vacant eyes staring at the chair opposite; then his lips began to move quickly, as if he were addressing some one. Then he rose, went to the bureau, and seemed to take something from it; then he sat down again. What a strange action of his hands! At first I could not understand it; then it flashed upon me that in this dream of his he must be shuffling cards. Yes, he began to deal; then he was playing with his adversary — his lips moving anxiously at times.

A look of terrible eagerness came over the sleepwalker's countenance. With nimble fingers he dealt the cards, and played. Suddenly with a sweep of his hand he seemed to fling the pack into the fireplace, started from his seat, grappled with his unseen adversary, raised his powerful right hand, and struck a tremendous blow. Hush! more footsteps along the passage! Am I deceived? From my concealment I watch for what is to follow. Colonel Bludyer comes in, half dressed, but wide awake.

"You maniac!" I hear him mutter: "I expected you were given to such tricks as these. Lucky for you no eyes but mine have seen your abject folly. Come back to your room."

Mr. Maryon is still gazing, his arms lifted wildly above his head, upon the imagined foe whom he had felled to the ground. The Colonel touches him on the shoulder, and leads him away, leaving the lamp. My reasoning faculties had fully returned to me. I held a clue to the secret, and for Agnes' sake it must be followed up. I took the lamp away, and placed it on a table where the chamber candlesticks stood, relit my own candle, and found my way back to my bedroom.

The next morning, when I came down to breakfast, I found Colonel Bludyer warming himself satisfactorily at the blazing fire. I learned from him that our host was far from well, and that Miss Maryon was in attendance upon her father; that the Colonel was charged with all kinds of apologies to me, and good wishes for my safe return home across the snow. I thanked him for the delivery of the message, while I felt perfectly convinced that he had never been charged with it. However that might be, I never saw Mr. Maryon that morning; and I started back to The Shallows through the snow.

For the next two or three days the weather was very wild, but I contrived to get up to The Mere, and ask after Mr. Maryon. Better, I was told, but unable to see any one. Miss Maryon, too, was fatigued with nursing her father. So there was nothing to do but to trudge home again.

"Reginald Westcar, The Mere is yours. Compel John Maryon to pay the debt of honor!"

Again and again these words forced themselves upon me, as I listlessly gazed out upon the white landscape. The strange scene that I had witnessed on that memorable night I passed beneath Mr. Maryon's roof had brought them back to my memory with redoubled force, and I began to think that the apparition I had seen — or dreamed of — on my first night at The Shallows had more of truth in it than I had been willing to believe.

Three more days passed away, and a carter-boy from The Mere brought me a note. It was Agnes' handwriting. It said:

"Dear Mr. Westcar: Pray come up here, if you possibly can. I cannot understand what is the matter with papa; and he wishes me to do a dreadful thing. Do come. I feel that I have no friend but you. I am obliged to send this note privately."

I need scarcely say that five minutes afterward I was plunging through the snow toward The Mere. It was already late on that dark February evening as I gained the shrubbery; and as I was pondering upon the best method of securing admittance, I became aware that the figure of a man was hurrying on some yards in front of me. At first I thought it must be one of the gardeners, but all of a sudden I stood still, and my blood seemed to freeze with horror, as I remarked that the figure in front of me *left no trace of footmarks on the snow!* My brain reeled for a moment, and I thought I should have fallen; but I recovered my nerves, and when I looked before me again, it had disappeared. I pressed on eagerly. I arrived at the front door — it was wide open; and I passed through the hall to the library. I heard Agnes' voice.

"No, no, papa. You must not force me to this! I cannot — will not — marry Colonel Bludyer!"

"You *must*," answered Mr. Maryon, in a hoarse voice; "you *must* marry him, and save your father from something worse than disgrace!"

Not feeling disposed to play the eavesdropper, I entered the room. Mr. Maryon was standing at the fireplace. Agnes was crouching on the ground at his feet. I saw at once that it was no use for me to dissemble the reason of my visit, and, without a word of greeting, I said:

"Miss Maryon, I have come, in obedience to your summons. If I can prevent any misfortune from falling upon you I am ready to help you, with my life. You have guessed that I love you. If my love is returned I am prepared to dispute my claim with any man."

Agnes, with a cry of joy, rose from her knees, and rushed toward me. Ah! how strong I felt as I held her in my arms!

"I have my answer," I continued. "Mr. Maryon, I have reason to believe that your daughter is in fear of the future you have forecast for her. I ask you to regard those fears, and to give her to me, to love and cherish as my wife."

Mr. Maryon covered his face with his hands; and I could hear him murmur, "Too late — too late!"

"No, not too late," I echoed. "What is this Bludyer to you, that you should sacrifice your daughter to a man whose very look proclaims him a villain? Nothing can compel you to such a deed — not even a *debt of honor*!"

What it was impelled me to say these last words I know not, but they had an extraordinary effect upon Mr. Maryon. He started toward me, then checked himself; his face was livid, his eyeballs glaring, and he threw up his arms in the strange manner I had already witnessed.

"What is all this?" exclaimed a harsh voice behind me. "Mr. Westcar insulting Miss Maryon and her father! it is time for me to interfere." And Colonel Bludyer approached me menacingly. All his jovial manner and fulsome courtesy was gone; and in his flushed face and insolent look the savage rascal was revealed.

"You will interfere at your peril," I replied. "I am a younger man than you are, and my strength has not been weakened by drink and dissipation. Take care."

The villain drew himself up to his full height; and, though he must have been at least some sixty years of age, I felt assured that I should meet no ordinary adversary if a personal struggle should ensue. Agnes fainted, and I laid her on a sofa.

"Miss Maryon wants air," said the Colonel, in a calmer voice. "Excuse me, Mr. Maryon, if I open a window." He tore open the shutters, and threw up the sash. "And now, Mr. Westcar, unless you are prepared to be sensible, and make your exit by the door, I shall be under the unpleasant necessity of throwing you out of the window."

The ruffian advanced toward me as he spoke. Suddenly he paused. His jaw dropped; his hair seemed literally to stand on end; his white lips quivered; he shook, as with an ague; his whole form appeared to shrink. I stared in amazement at the awful change. A strange thrill shot through me, as I heard a quiet voice say:

"Richard Bludyer, your grave is waiting for you. Go."

The figure of a man passed between me and him. The wretched man shrank back, and, with a wild cry, leaped from the window he had opened.

All this time Mr. Maryon was standing like a lifeless statue.

In helpless wonder I gazed at the figure before me. I saw clearly the features in profile, and, swift as lightning, my memory was carried back to the unforgettens scene in the churchyard upon the Lake of Lucerne, and I recognized the white face of the young man with whom I there had spoken.

"John Maryon," said the voice, "this is the night upon which, a quarter of a century ago, you killed me. It is your last night on earth. You must go through the tragedy again."

Mr. Maryon, still statue-like, beckoned to the figure, and opened a half-concealed door which led into his study. The strange but opportune visitant seemed to motion to me with a gesture of his hand, which I felt I must obey, and I followed in this weird procession. From the study we mounted by a private staircase to a large, well-furnished bedchamber. Here we paused. Mr. Maryon looked tremblingly at the stranger, and said, in a low, stammering voice:

"This is my room. In this room, on this night, twenty-five years ago, you told me that you were certain Sir Henry Benet's will was in existence, and that you had made up your mind to dispute my possession to this property. You had discovered letters from Sir Henry to your father which gave you a clue to the spot where that will might be found. You, Geoffrey Ringwood, of generous and extravagant nature, offered to find the will in my presence. It was late at night, as now; all the household slept. I accepted your invitation, and followed you."

Mr. Maryon ceased; he seemed physically unable to continue. The terrible stranger, in his low, echoing voice, replied:

"Go on; confess all."

"You and I, Geoffrey, had been what the world calls friends. We had been much in London together; we were both passionately fond of cards. We had a common acquaintance, Richard Bludyer. He was present on the 2d of February, when I lost a large sum of money to you at *écarté*. He hinted to me that you might possibly use these sums in instituting a lawsuit against me for the recovery of this estate. Your intimation that you knew of the existence of the will alarmed me, as it had become necessary for me to remain owner of The Mere. As I have said, I accepted your invitation, and followed you to Sir Henry Benet's room; and now I follow you again."

As he said these words, Geoffrey Ringwood, or his ghost, passed silently by Mr. Maryon, and led the way into the corridor. At the end of the corridor all three paused outside an oak door which I remembered well. A gesture from the leader made Mr. Maryon continue:

"On this threshold you told me suddenly that Bludyer was a villain, and had betrayed your sister Aldina; that she had fled with him that night; that he could never marry her, as you had reason to know he had a wife alive. You made me swear to help you in your vengeance against him. We entered the room, as we enter it now."

Our leader had opened the door of the room, and we were in the same chamber I had wandered to when I had slept at The Mere. The figure of Geoffrey Ringwood paused at the round table, and looked again at Mr. Maryon, who proceeded:

"You went straight to the fifth panel from the fireplace, and then touched a spring, and the panel opened. You said that the will giving this property to your father and his heirs was to be found there. I was convinced that you spoke the truth, but, suddenly remembering your love of gambling, I suggested that we should play for it. You accepted at once. We searched among the papers, and found the will. We placed the will upon the table, and began to play. We agreed that we would play up to ten thousand pounds. Your luck was marvellous. In two hours the limit was reached. I owed you ten thousand pounds, and had lost The Mere. You laughed, and said, 'Well, John, you have had a fair chance. At ten o'clock this morning I shall expect you to pay me *your debt of honor*.' I rose; the devil of despair strong upon me. With one hand I swept the cards from the table into the fire, and with the other seized you by the throat, and dealt you a blow upon the temple. You fell dead upon the floor."

Need I say that as I heard this fearful narrative, I recognized the actions of the sleepwalker, and understood them all?

"To the end!" said the hollow voice. "Confess to the end!"

“The doctor who examined your body gave his opinion, at the inquest, that you had died of apoplexy, caused by strong cerebral excitement. My evidence was to the effect that I believed you had lost a very large sum of money to Captain Bludyer, and that you had told me you were utterly unable to pay it. The jury found their verdict accordingly, and I was left in undisturbed possession of The Mere. But the memory of my crime haunted me as only such memories can haunt a criminal, and I became a morose and miserable man. One thing bound me to life — my daughter. When Reginald Westcar appeared upon the scene I thought that the debt of honor would be satisfied if he married Agnes. Then Bludyer reappeared, and he told me that he knew that I had killed you. He threatened to revive the story, to exhume your body, and to say that Aldina Ringwood had told him all about the will. I could purchase his silence only by giving him my daughter, the heiress of The Mere. To this I consented.”

As he said these last words, Mr. Maryon sunk heavily into the chair.

The figure of Geoffrey Ringwood placed one ghostly hand upon his left temple, and then passed silently out of the room. I started up, and followed the phantom along the corridor — down the staircase — out at the front door, which still stood open — across the snow-covered lawn — into the plantation; and then it disappeared as strangely as I first had seen it; and, hardly knowing whether I was mad or dreaming, I found my way back to The Shallows.

For some weeks I was ill with brain-fever. When I recovered I was told that terrible things had happened at The Mere. Mr. Maryon had been found dead in Sir Henry Benet’s room — an effusion of blood upon the brain, the doctors said — and the body of Colonel Bludyer had been discovered in the snow in an old disused gravel-pit not far from the house.

A year afterward I married Agnes Maryon; and, if all that I had seen and heard upon that 3d of February was not merely the invention of a fevered brain, the debt of honor was at last discharged, for I, the nephew of the murdered Geoffrey Ringwood, became the owner of The Mere.

DEVEREUX'S DREAM.

I GIVE you this story only at second-hand; but you have it in substance — and he wasted few words over it — as Paul Devereux told it me.

It was not the only queer story he could have told about himself if he had chosen, by a good many, I should say. Paul's life had been an eminently unconventional one: the man's face certified to that — hard, bronzed, war-worn, seamed and scarred with strange battle-marks — the face of a man who had dared and done most things.

It was not his custom to speak much of what he had done, however. Probably only because he and I were little likely to meet again that he told me this I am free to tell you now.

We had come across one another for the first time for years that afternoon on the Italian Boulevart. Paul had landed a couple of weeks previously at Marseilles from a long yacht-cruise in southern waters, the monotony of which we heard had been agreeably diversified by a little pirate-hunting and slaver-chasing — the evil tongues called it piracy and slave-running; and certainly Devereux was quite equal to either *métier*; and he was about starting on a promising little filibustering expedition across the Atlantic, where the chances were he would be shot, and the certainty was that he would be starved. So perhaps he felt inclined to be a trifle more communicative than usual, as we sat late that night over a blazing pyre of logs and in a cloud of Cavendish. At all events he was, and after this fashion.

I forget now exactly how the subject was led up to. Expression of some philosophic incredulity on my part regarding certain matters, followed by a ten-minutes' silence on his side pregnant with unwonted words to come — that was it, perhaps. At last he said, more to himself, it seemed, than to me:

“Such stuff as dreams are made of.” Well, who knows? You're a Sadducee, Bertie; you call this sort of thing, politely, indigestion. Perhaps you're right. But yet I had a queer dream once.”

“Not unlikely,” I assented.

“You're wrong; I never dream, as a rule. But, as I say, I had a queer dream once; and queer because it came literally true three years afterward.”

“Queer indeed, Paul.”

“Happens to be true. What's queerer still, my dream was the means of my finding a man I owed a long score, and a heavy one, and of my paying him in full.”

“Bad for the payee!” I thought.

Paul's face had grown terribly eloquent as he spoke those last words. On a sudden the expression of it changed — another memory was stirring in him. Wonderfully tender the fierce eyes grew; wonderfully tender the faint, sad smile, that was like sunshine on storm-scathed granite. That smile transfigured the man before me.

“Ah, poor child — poor Lucille!” I heard him mutter.

That was it, was it? So I let him be. Presently he lifted his head. If he had let himself get the least thing out of hand for a moment, he had got back his self-mastery the next.

“I'll tell you that queer story, Bertie, if you like,” he said.

The proposition was flatteringly unusual, but the voice was quite his own.

“Somehow I'd sooner talk than think about — *her*,” he went on after a pause.

I nodded. He might talk about this, you see, but *I* couldn't. He began with a question — an odd one:

“Did you ever hear I'd been married?”

Paul Devereux and a wife had always seemed and been to me a most unheard-of conjunction. So I laconically said:

“No.”

“Well, I was once, years ago. She was my wife — that child — for a week. And then — — —”

I easily filled up the pause; but, as it happened, I filled it up wrongly; for he added:

“And then she was murdered.”

I was not unused to our Paul's stony style of talk; but this last sentence was sufficiently startling.

“Eh?”

“Murdered — in her sleep. They never found the man who did it either, though I had Durbec and all the Rue de Jérusalem at work. But I forgave them that, for I found the man myself, and killed him.”

He was filling his pipe again as he told me this, and he perhaps rammed the Cavendish in a little tighter, but that was all. The thing was a matter of course; I knew my Paul, well enough to know that. Of course he killed him.

“Mind you,” he continued, kindling the black *brûle-gueule* the while — “mind you, I'd never seen this man before, never known of his existence, except in a way that — however, it was this way.”

He let his grizzled head drop back on the cushions of his chair, and his eyes seemed to see the queer story he was telling enacted once more before him in the red hollows of the fire.

“As I said, it was years ago. I was waiting here in Paris for some fellows who were to join me in a campaign we'd arranged against the African big game. I never was more fit for anything of that sort than I was then. I only tell you this to show you that the thing can't be accounted for by my nerves having been out of order at all.

“Well: I was dining alone that day, at the Café Anglais. It was late when I sat down to my dinner in the little salon as usual. Only two other men were still lingering over theirs. All the time they stayed they bored me so persistently with some confounded story of a murder they were discussing, that I was once or twice more than half-inclined to tell them so. At last, though, they went away.

“But their talk kept buzzing abominably in my head. When the waiter brought me the evening paper, the first thing that caught my eye was a circumstantial account of the *probable* way the fellow did his murder. I say probable, for they never caught him; and, as you will see directly, they could only suppose how it occurred.

"It seemed that a well-known Paris banker, who was ascertained beyond doubt to have left one station alive and well, and with a couple of hundred thousand francs in a leathern *sac* under his seat, arrived at the next station the train stopped at with his throat cut and *minus* all his money, except a few banknotes to no great amount, which the assassin had been wise enough to leave behind him. The train was a night express on one of the southern lines; the banker travelled quite alone, in a first-class carriage; and the murder must have taken place between midnight and 1 a.m. next morning. The newspapers supposed — rightly enough, I think — that the murderer must have entered the carriage *from without*, stabbed his victim in his sleep — there were no signs of any struggle — opened the *sac*, taken what he wanted, and retreated, loot and all, by the way he came. I fully indorsed my particular writer's opinion that the murderer was an uncommonly cool and clever individual, especially as I fancy he got clear off and was never afterward laid hands on.

"When I had done that I thought I had done with the affair altogether. Not at all. I was regularly ridden with this confounded murder. You see the banker was rather a swell; everybody knew him: and that, of course, made it so shocking. So everybody kept talking about him: they were talking about him at the Opera, and over the *baccarat* and *bouillotte* at La Topaze's later. To escape him I went to bed and smoked myself to sleep. And then a queer thing came to pass: I had a dream — I who never dream; and this is what I dreamed:

"I saw a wide, rich country that I knew. A starless night hung over it like a pall. I saw a narrow track running through it, straight, both ways, for leagues. Something sped along this track with a hurtling rush and roar. This something that at first had looked like a red-eyed devil, with dark sides full of dim fire, resolved itself, as I watched it, presently, into a more conventional night express-train. It flew along, though, as no express-train ever travelled yet; for all that, I was able to keep it quite easily in view. I could count the carriages as they whirled by. One — two — three — four — five — six; but I could only see distinctly into one. Into that one with perfect distinctness. Into that one I seemed forced to look.

"It was the fourth carriage. Two people were in it. They sat in opposite corners; both were sleeping. The one who sat facing forward was a woman — a girl, rather. I could see that; but I couldn't see her face. The blind was drawn across the lamp in the roof, and the light was very dim; moreover, this girl lay back in the shadow. Yet I seemed to know her, and I knew that her face was very fair. She wore a cloak that shrouded her form completely, yet her form was familiar to me.

"The figure opposite to her was a man's. Strangely familiar to me too this figure was. But, as he slept, his head had sunk upon his breast, and the shadow cast upon his face by the low-drawn travelling-cap he wore hid it from me. Yet if I had seemed to know the girl's face, I was certain I knew the man's. But as I could see, so I could remember, neither. And there was an absolute torture in this which I can't explain to you, — in this inability, and in my inability to wake them from their sleep.

"From the first I had been conscious of a desire to do that. This desire grew stronger every second. I tried to call to them, and my tongue wouldn't move. I tried to spring toward them, to thrust out my arms and touch them, and my limbs were paralyzed. And then I tried to shut my eyes to what I *knew* must happen, and my eyes were held open and dragged to look on in spite of me. And I saw this:

"I saw the door of the carriage where these two sleepers, whose sleep was so horribly sound, were sitting — I saw this door open, and out of the thick darkness another face look in.

"The light, as I have said, was very dim, but I could see his face as plainly as I can see yours. A large yellow face it was, like a wax mask. The lips were full, and lustful and cruel. The eyes were little eyes of an evil gray. Thin yellow streaks marked the absence of the eyebrows; thin yellow hair showed itself under a huge fur travelling-cap. The whole face seemed to grow slowly into absolute distinctness as I looked, by the sort of devilish light that it, as it were, radiated. I had chanced upon a good many damnable visages before then; but there was a cold fiendishness about this one such as I had seen on no man's face, alive or dead, till then.

"The next moment the man this face belonged to was standing in the carriage, that seemed to plunge and sway more furiously, as though to waken them that still slept on. He wore a long fur travelling-robe, girt about the waist with a fur girdle. Abnormally tall and broad as he was, he looked in this dress gigantic. Yet there was a marvellous cat-like lightness and agility about all his movements.

"He bent over the girl lying there helpless in her sleep. I don't make rash bargains as a rule, but I felt I would have given years of my life for five minutes of my lost freedom of limb just then. I tell you the torture was infernal.

"The assassin — I knew he was an assassin — bent awhile, gloatingly, over the girl. His great yellow hands were both bare, and on the forefinger of the right hand I could see some great stone blazing like an evil eye. In that right hand there gleamed something else. I saw him draw it slowly from his sleeve, and, as he drew it, turn round and look at the other sleeper with an infernal triumphant malignity and hate the Devil himself might have envied. But the man he looked at slept heavily on. And then — God! I feel the agony I felt in my dream then now! — then I saw the great yellow hand, with the great evil eye upon it, lifted murderously, and the bright steel it held shimmer as the assassin turned again and bent his yellow face down closer to that other face hidden from me in the shadow — the girl's face, that I knew was so fair.

"How can I tell this?... The blade flashed and fell.... There was the sound of a heavy sigh stifled under a heavy hand....

"Then the huge form of the assassin was reared erect, and the bloated yellow face seemed to laugh silently, while the hand that held the steel pointed at the sleeping man in diabolical menace.

"And so the huge form and the bloated yellow face seemed to fade away while I watched.

"The express rushed and roared through the blinding darkness without; the sleeping man slept on still; till suddenly a strong light fell full upon him, and he woke.

"And then I saw why I had been so certain that I knew him. For as he lifted his head, I saw his face in the strong light.

"*And the face was my own face; and the sleeper was myself!*"

Paul Devereux made a pause in his queer story here. Except when he had spoken of the girl, he had spoken in his usual cool, hard way. The pipe he had been smoking all the time was smoked out. He took time to fill another before he went on. I said never a word, for I guessed who the sleeping girl was.

"Well," Paul remarked presently, "that was a devilish queer dream, wasn't it? You'll account for it by telling me I'd been so pestered with the story of the banker's murder that I naturally had nightmare; perhaps, too, that my digestion was out of order.

Call it a nightmare, call it dyspepsia, if you like. I *don't*, because — — But you'll see why I don't directly.

"At the same moment that my dream-self awoke in my dream, my actual self woke in reality, and with the same ghastly horror.

"I say the *same* horror, for neither then nor afterward could I separate my one self from my other self. They seemed identical; so that this queer dream made a more lasting impression upon me than you'd think. However, in the life I led that sort of thing couldn't last very long. Before I came back from Africa I had utterly forgotten all about it. Before I left Paris, though, and while it was quite fresh in my memory, I sketched the big murderer just as I had seen him in my dream. The great yellow face, the great broad frame in the fur travelling-robe, the great hand with the great evil eye upon it — everything, carefully and minutely, as though I had been going to paint a portrait that I wanted to make lifelike. I think at the time I had some such intention. If I had, I never fulfilled it. But I made the sketch, as I say, carefully; and then I forgot all about it.

"Time passed — three years nearly. I was wintering in the south of France that year. There it was that I met her — Lucille. Old D'Avray, her father, and I had met before in Algeria. He was dying now. He left the child on his deathbed to me. The end was I married her.

"Poor little thing! I think I might have made her happy — who knows? She used to tell me often she was happy with me. Poor little thing!

"Well, we were to come straight to London. That was Lucille's notion. She wanted to go to my London first — nowhere else. Now I would rather have gone anywhere else; but, naturally, I let the child have her way. She seemed nervously eager about it, I remembered afterward; seemed to have a nervous objection to every other place I proposed. But I saw or suspected nothing to make me question her very closely, or the reasons for her preference for our grimy old Pandemonium. What could I suspect? Not the truth. If I only had! If I had only guessed what it was that made her, as she said, long to be safe there already. Safe? What had she to fear with me? Ah, what indeed!

"So we started on our journey to England. It was a cold, dark night, early in March. We reached Lyons somewhere about seven. I should have stayed there that night but for Lucille. She entreated me so earnestly and with such strange vehemence to go on by the night-mail to Paris, that at last, to satisfy her, I consented; though it struck me unpleasantly at the time that I had let her travel too long already, and that this feverishness was the consequence of over-fatigue. But she became pacified at once when I told her it should be as she wanted; and declared she should sleep perfectly well in the carriage with me beside her. She should feel quite safe then, she said.

"Safe! Where safer? you might ask. Nowhere, I believe. Alone with me — surely nowhere safer. The Paris express was a short train that night; but I managed to secure a compartment for ourselves. I left Lucille in her corner there while I went across to the *buffet* to fill a flask. I was gone barely five minutes; but when I came back the change in the child's face fairly startled me. I had seen it last with the smile it always wore for me on it, looking so childishly happy in the lamplight. Now it was all gray-pale and distorted; and the great blue eyes told me directly with what.

"Fear — sudden, terrible fear — I thought. But *fear*? Fear of what? I asked her. She clung close to me half-sobbing awhile before she could answer; and then she told me — nothing. There was nothing the matter; only she had felt a pain — a cruel pain — at her heart; and it had frightened her. Yes, that was it; it had frightened her, but it had passed; and she was well, quite well again now.

"All this time her eyes seemed to be telling me another story; but I said nothing; she was obviously too excited already. I did my best to soothe her, and I succeeded. She told me she felt quite well once more before we started. No, she had rather, much rather go on to Paris, as I had promised her she should. She should sleep all the way, if no one came into the carriage to disturb her. No one could come in? Then nothing could be better.

"And so it was that she and I started that night by the Paris mail.

"I made her up a bed of rugs and wraps upon the cushions; but she had rather rest her head upon my shoulder, she said, and feel my arm about her; nothing could hurt her then. Ah, strange how she harped on that.

"She lay there, then, as she loved best — with her head resting on my shoulder, not sleeping much or soundly; uneasily, with sudden waking starts, and with glances round her; till I would speak to her. And then she would look up into my face and smile; and so drop into that uneasy sleep again. And I would think she was over-tired, that was all; and reproach myself with having let her come on. And three or four hours passed like this; and then we had got as far as Dijon.

"But the child was fairly worn out now; and she offered no opposition when I asked her to let me pillow her head on something softer than my shoulder. So I folded, a great thick shawl she was too well cloaked to need, and she made that her pillow.

"We were rushing full swing through the wild, dark night, when she lifted up her face and bade me kiss her and bid her sleep well. And I put my arm round her, and kissed the child's loving lips — for the last time while she lived. Then I flung myself on the seat opposite her; and, watching her till she slept soundly and peacefully, slept at last myself also. I had drawn the blind across the lamp in the roof, and the light in the carriage was very dim.

"How long I slept I don't know; it couldn't have been more than an hour and a half, because the express was slackening speed for its first halt beyond Dijon. I had slept heavily I knew; but I woke with a sudden, sharp sense of danger that made me broad awake, and strung every nerve in a moment. The sort of feeling you have when you wake on a prairie, where you have come across 'Indian sign,' on outpost-duty, when your *feldwebel* plucks gently at your cloak. You know what I mean.

"I was on my feet at once. As I said, the light in the carriage was very dim, and the shadow was deepest where Lucille lay. I looked there instinctively. She must have moved in her sleep, for her face was turned away from me; and the cloak I had put so carefully about her had partly fallen off. But she slept on still. Only soundly, very soundly; she scarcely seemed to breathe. And — *did* she breathe?

"A ghastly fear ran through my blood, and froze it. I understood why I had wakened. In my nostrils was an awful odor that I knew well enough. I bent over her; I touched her. Her face was very cold; her eyes glared glassily at me; my hands were wet with something. My hands were wet with blood — her blood!

"I tore away the blind from the lamp, and then I could see that my wife of a week lay there stabbed straight to the heart — dead — dead beyond doubting; murdered in her sleep."

Devereux's stern, low voice shook ever so little as he spoke those last words; and we both sat very silent after them for a good while. Only when he could trust his utterance again he went on.

"A curious piece of devilry, wasn't it? That child — whom had she ever harmed? Who could hate her like this? I remember I thought that, in a dull, confused sort of way, when I found myself alone in that carriage with her lying dead on the cushions before me. *Alone* with her — you understand? It was confusing.

"I pass over what immediately followed. The express came duly to a halt; and then I called people to me, and — and the Paris express went on without that particular carriage.

"The inquiry began before some local authority next day. Very little came of it. What could come of it, unless they had convicted *me* of the murder of this child I would have given my own life to save?

"They might have done that at home; but they knew better here, and didn't. They couldn't find me the actual assassin, however; though I believe they did their best. All they found was his weapon, which he most purposely have left behind. I asked for this, and got it. It gave their police no clue; and it gave me none. But I had a fancy for it.

"It was a plain, double-edged, admirably-tempered dagger — a very workmanlike article indeed. On the cross hilt of it I swore one day that I would live thenceforth for one thing alone — the discovery of the murderer of old D'Avray's child, whom I had promised him to care for before all. When I had found this man, whoever he was, I also swore that I would kill him. Kill him myself, you understand; without any of the law's delay or uncertainty, without troubling *bourreau* or hangman. Kill him as he had killed her — to do this was what I meant to live for. There was war to the knife between him and me.

"I started, of course, under one heavy disadvantage. He knew me, probably, whereas I didn't know him at all. When he found that his amiable intention of fixing the crime on me had been frustrated, it must, I imagined, have occurred to him that the said crime might eventually be fixed by me on him. And he had proved himself to be a person who didn't stick at trifles. It behooved me, therefore, to go to work cautiously. But I hadn't fought Indians for nothing; and I *was* very cautious. I waited quiet till I got a clue. It was a curious one; and I got it in this way. It struck me one day, suddenly, that I had heard of a murder precisely similar to this already. I could not at first call the thing to mind; but presently I remembered — my dream. And then I asked myself this: *Had not this murder been done before my eyes three years ago?*

"I came to the conclusion that the circumstances of the murder in my dream were absolutely identical with the circumstances of the actual crime. Yes; the girl whose face in that dream I had never been able to see was Lucille. Yes; the assassin whose face I had seen so plainly in that dream was the real assassin. In short, I believe that the murder had been *rehearsed* before me three years previous to its actual committal.

"Now this sounds rather wild. Yet I came to this conviction quite coolly and deliberately. It *was* a conviction. Assuming it to be true, the odds against me grew shorter directly; *for I had the portrait of the man I wanted drawn by myself the day after I had seen him in my dream.* And the original of that portrait was a man not to be easily mistaken, supposing him to exist at all. The day I came across that sketch of him in that old forgotten sketch-book of mine, I was as sure he did exist as that I was alive myself. What I had to do was to find this man, and then I never doubted I should find the man I wanted. You see how the odds had shortened. If he knew me I knew him now, and he had no notion that I did know him. It was a good deal fairer fight between us.

"I fought it out alone. My story was hardly one the Rue de Jérusalem would have acted upon; and, besides, I wanted no interference. So, with the portrait before me, I sat down and began to consider who this man was, and why he had murdered that child. The big, burly frame, the heavy yellow face, the sandy-yellow hair, the physiognomy generally, was Teutonic. My man I put down as a North German. Now there were, and are probably, plenty of men who would have no objection whatever to put a knife into me, if they got the chance; but this man, whom I had never met, could have had no such quarrel as theirs with me. His quarrel with me must have been, then, Lucille. Yes, that was it — Lucille. I began to see clearly: a thwarted, devilish passion — a cool, infernal revenge. The child had feared something of this sort; had perhaps seen him that night. This explained her nervous terror, her nervous anxiety to stop nowhere, to travel on. In that carriage of that express-train, alone with me — where could she be safer? This accounted, too, for her anxiety to reach England. He would not dare follow her there, she had thought, or, at least, could not without my noticing him. And then she would have told me. She had not told me before evidently because she had feared for *me* too, in a quarrel with this man. She must, innocent child as she was, have had some instinctive knowledge of what he was capable.... Ay, a cool, infernal revenge, indeed. To kill her; to fix the murder on me. That dagger he had left behind.... The apparent impossibility of any one's entering the carriage as he must have entered it at all, to say nothing of the almost absolute impossibility of his doing so without disturbing either of us, — you see it might have gone hard with me if a British jury had had to decide on the case.

"Well, to cut this as short as may be, I made up my mind that the man I wanted was a North German; that he had conceived a hideous passion for Lucille before I knew her; that she had shrunk from it and him so unmistakably, that he knew he had no chance; that my taking her away as my wife, to which he might have been a witness, drove him to as hideous a revenge; that, hearing we were going to England, and seeing that we were likely to stop nowhere on the way, and so give him a chance of doing what he had made up his mind to do, he had decided to do what he had done as he had done it, — counting on finding us asleep as he had found us, or on his strength if it came to a fight between him and me; but coolly reckless enough to brave everything in any case. And the devil aiding, he had in great part and only too well succeeded. He was now either so far satisfied that, if I made no move against him — and how, he might think, could I? — he, feeling himself all safe, would let me be; or, on the other hand, he did not feel safe, and was not satisfied, and was arranging for my being disposed of by and by. I considered the latter frame of mind as his most probable one; I went to work cautiously, as I say. I ascertained that Lucille had made no mention of any obnoxious *prétendant* at any time; I didn't expect to find she had, her terror of the man was too intense. But this man must have met her somewhere — where?

"When old D'Avray came home to die, his daughter was just leaving her Paris *pensionnat*. All through his last illness he had seen no visitor but me, and Lucille had never quitted him. Besides, I had been there all the time. I presumed, then, that this man

and she had met in Paris; and I believe they were only likely to have met at one of the half-dozen houses where the child would now and again be asked. I got a list of all these. One name only struck me; it happened to be a German name — Steinmetz. I wondered if Monsieur Steinmetz was my man. In the mean time, who was he? I had no trouble in finding that out: Monsieur Steinmetz was a German banker of good standing and repute, reasonably well off, and recently left a widower. Personally? *Dame*, personally Monsieur Steinmetz was a great man and a fat, with a big face and blond hair, and the appearance of what he really was — a *bon vivant* and a *bon enfant* yet *n'avait jamais fait de mal à personne* — *allez!* — All, yes; in effect, Madame had died about a year ago, and Monsieur had been inconsolable for a long time. He had changed his residence now, and inhabited a house in one of the new streets off the Champs Elysées.

“From another source I discovered that in the lifetime of Madame Steinmetz Lucille was frequently at the house. She had ceased to come there about the date of the commencement of Madame’s sudden illness. I got this information by degrees, while I lay *perdu* in an old haunt of mine in the Pays Latin yonder; for I had always had an idea that I should find the man I wanted in Paris. When I had got it, I thought I should like to see Monsieur Steinmetz, the agreeable banker. One night I strolled up as far as his new residence in the street off the Champs Elysées. Monsieur Steinmetz lived on the first-floor. There was a brilliant light there: Monsieur Steinmetz was entertaining friends, it seemed.

“It was a fine night; I established myself out of sight under the doorway of an unfinished house opposite, and waited. I don’t know why; perhaps I fancied that when his friends were gone, the fineness of the night might induce Monsieur Steinmetz to take a stroll, and that then I should be able to gratify my curiosity. You see, I knew that if he were my man, I should know him directly. I waited a good while: shadows crossed the lighted blinds; once a big, broad shadow appeared there, that made me fancy I mightn’t have been waiting for nothing after all, somehow. Presently Monsieur Steinmetz’s guests departed, and in a little while after there appeared on the little balcony of Monsieur Steinmetz’s apartment *the man I wanted*. There was a moon that night, and the cold white light fell on the great yellow face, with the full lustful lips, and the full cruel chin, just as I had seen the light fall on it in my dream. It was the same face, Bertie; the same face, the same man. I couldn’t be mistaken. I had no doubt; I *knew* that the assassin of my wife, of that tender, innocent, helpless child, stood there, twenty yards from me, on that balcony.

“I had got myself pretty well in hand; and it was as well. I never moved. The face I knew turned presently toward the spot where I stood hidden, — the face I had seen in my dream, beyond all doubting. The evil gray eyes glanced carelessly into the shadow, and up and down the quiet street; and then Monsieur Steinmetz, humming an air, got inside the window again, and closed it after him. Once more the great burly shadow that had at first told me I should not wait in that dark doorway in vain crossed the blinds; and then it disappeared. I saw my man no more that night; but I had seen enough. I knew who he was now, and where to find him.

“As I walked along home I thought what I would do. I quite meant to kill Monsieur Steinmetz; but I also meant to have no *démêlés* with an Impérial Procureur and the Cour d’Assizes for doing so. I didn’t want to murder him, either. I thought I would wait a little for the chance of a suitable opportunity for settling my business satisfactorily. And I did wait. I turned this delay to account, and got together a case of circumstantial evidence against my man that, though perhaps it might have broken down in a law-court, would have been alone amply sufficient for me.

“The reason why Lucille’s visits to the banker’s house ceased was, it appeared, because Madame Steinmetz had conceived all at once a jealous dislike to her. How far this was owing to Lucille herself I could well understand; but I could understand Madame’s jealousy equally well. Madame’s illness, strangely sudden, dated from the cessation of Lucille’s visits. Was it hard to find a *cause* for that illness — a cause for the wife’s subsequent suspected death? I thought not. Then had followed Lucille’s departure from Paris. The child’s anxiety for her father hid her *other fear* from his eyes and mine; but that fear must have been on her then. With us she forgot it in time; yet it or another reason had always prevented all mention of what had occasioned it. She became my wife. At that very time I easily ascertained that Steinmetz was absent from Paris; less easily, but indubitably, that he had, at all events, been as far south as Lyons. At Lyons it must have been that Lucille first discovered he was dogging us. Hence her alarm, which I had remembered, and her anxiety to proceed on our journey without stopping for the night, as I had previously arranged. The morning after the murder Steinmetz reappeared in Paris. From the hour at which he was seen at the *gare*, it was certain that he had travelled by the night express train in which Lucille and I had started from Lyons; and he wore that morning a travelling-coat of fur in all respects similar to the one I remembered so well.

“If I had ever had any doubt of my man after actually seeing him, I should probably have convinced myself that he was my man by the general tendency of these facts, which I got at slowly and one by one. But I had no need of such evidence; and of course no case, even with such evidence, for a court of law. However, courts of law I had never intended to trouble in the matter.

“The opportunity I was waiting was some time before it offered. Monsieur Steinmetz was a man of regular habits, I found — from his first-floor in the street off the Champs Elysées, every morning at eleven, to the Bourse; thence to his bureau hard by till four; from his bureau to his café, where he read papers and played dominoes till six; and then home slowly by the Boulevards. He might consider himself tolerably safe from me while he led this sort of life, even supposing he was aware he was incurring any danger. I don’t think he troubled much about that; till one night, when, over the count of the beloved domino-points, his eyes met mine fixed right upon him. I had arranged this little surprise to see how it would affect him.

“Perhaps my gaze may have expressed something more than the mere distraction I intended; but I noticed — though a more indifferent observer might easily have failed to notice — how the great yellow face, expanded in childish interest in the childish game, seemed suddenly to grow gray and harden; how the fat smile became a cruel barring of sharp white teeth; how the fat chin squared itself. The man knew me, and scented danger.

“A moment’s reflection convinced Monsieur Steinmetz, though, that it could be by no means so certain that I knew him; five minutes’ observation of me more than half satisfied him that I did not. Yet what did I want there? What was I doing in Paris? This might concern him nearly, he must have thought.

“I kept my own face in order, and watched his. It wasn’t an easy one to read; but you see I had studied it closely, and in a way he couldn’t have dreamed of. Monsieur Steinmetz was outwardly his wonted self, but inwardly not quite comfortable when he rose; and I saw the evil eye gleam on his great yellow finger as he took out his purse to pay the *garçon*, just as I had seen it when that finger pointed at *myself* in my dream. I felt curious sensations, Bertie, as I sat there and looked abstractedly at

Monsieur Steinmetz. I wondered how long it would be before — But my time hadn't come yet. He went out without another glance at me. I saw his huge form on the other side of the street when I left the café in my turn. This I had expected. Monsieur Steinmetz was naturally curious. It was hardly possible that I could know him; but it was quite certain that he ought to know all about me. So, when I moved on, he moved on; in short, Monsieur Steinmetz dogged me up one street and down another, till he finally dogged me home to my hiding-place in the Pays Latin. He did it very well, too — much better than you would have expected from so apparently unwieldy a *mouchard*. But I remembered how lightly he could move.

"Next day I had, of course, disappeared from my old quarters, and gone no one knew where. I suppose Monsieur Steinmetz didn't like this fact when he heard of it. It might have seemed suspicious. Suppose I *had* recognized him? In that case I had evidently a little game of my own, and was as evidently desirous to keep it dark. He was a cool hand; but I fancy my man began to get a little uneasy. He took some trouble to find me again. After a while I permitted him to do that. Once found, he seemed determined that I should not be lost sight of again for want of watching. I permitted that, too; it helped play my game, and I wanted to bring it to an end. To which intent, Monsieur Steinmetz got to hear from sources best known to himself as much of my plans as should bring him to the state I wanted. That was a murderous state. I wanted to get him to think that I was dangerous enough to be worth putting out of the way. I presume he was aware there were, or would be, weak joints in his armor, impenetrable as it seemed; and he preferred not risking the ordeal of legal battle if he could help it. At all events, he elected at last to rid himself of a person who might be dangerous, and was troublesome, by the shortest and the simplest means.

"I say so because when, believing my man was ripe for this, I left Paris about midday for a certain secluded little spot on the sea-coast, I saw one of Monsieur Steinmetz's employees on the platform; and because, two days after my arrival in my secluded spot, I met Monsieur Steinmetz in person, newly arrived also. Now this was exactly what I had intended and anticipated. Monsieur Steinmetz had come down there to put me out of his way, if he could. He passed me, leisurely strolling in the opposite direction, humming his favorite *aria*, bigger and yellower than ever, the evil eye fiery on his finger. His own eyes shot me as evil fire; but he said nothing.... I saw he was ripe, though.... My time was close at hand.

"It came. Monsieur Steinmetz and I met once more in the very place where I, knowing my ground, had intended we should meet. It was a dip in the cliffs like a hollowed palm, and just there the cliff jutted out a good bit, with a sheer fall on to the rocks below. It was a gray afternoon, at the end of summer. The wind was rising fast; there was a thunder of heavy waves already.

"I think he had been dogging me; but I hadn't chosen to let him get up to me till now. We were quite out of sight when he had reached the level bottom of the dip, where I had halted — quite out of sight, and quite alone. To do him justice, he came on steadily enough. His face was liker the sketch I had made of it, liker the face I had seen in my dream, than it had ever looked before. Evidently he had made up his mind.... At last, then!... Well, I had been waiting long!... He was close beside me.

"*Ah! bon jour, cher Monsieur Steinmetz.*"

"*'So?'* he said, his little eyes contracting like a cobra's. *'Ah! Monsieur knows my name?'*

"*'Among other things about you — yes.'*

"*'So!'* The yellow face was turning grayer and harder every minute — liker and liker to my likeness of it. *'And what other things? Has it never appeared to you that this you do, have been doing — this meddling, may be dangerous, hein?'*

"He had changed his tone, as he had changed the person in which he addressed me. Yes, he had certainly made up his mind. And his big right hand was hidden inside his waistcoat, so that I could not see the evil eye I knew was on his finger.

"*'Dangerous?'* he repeated slowly.

"*'Possibly.'*

"*'Ay, surely; I shall crush you!'*

"*'Try.'*

"*'In good time; wait. You plot against me. Take care; I am strong; I warn you. There must be an end of this, you understand, or — —'*

"He nodded his big head significantly.

"*'You are right,'* I told him; *'there must be an end. It is coming.'*

"*'So?'*

"*'Yes; I know you. You know me now.'*

"*'I know you. What do you want?'*

"*'To kill you.'*

"*'So?'*

"*'Yes; as you killed her.'*

"*'As I killed her? That is it, then? You know that?'*

"*'I know that.'*

"*'Well, it is true. I killed her. Now you can guess what I am going to do to you — to you, curse you! — whom she loved.'*

"The very face I had seen in my dream now, Bertie, the very face! There was something besides the evil eye that gleamed in his right hand when he drew it from his breast. Once more he spoke. *'Yes, I killed her. I meant worse for you. You escaped that; but you will not escape me now. Fool! were you mad to do this? Did not I hate you enough? And I would have let you be. Ah, die, then, if you will have it so!'*

"His heavy right arm swung high as he spoke, and I saw the sharp steel gleam as it turned to fall. And I twisted from his grip, and caught the falling arm, and bent it till the dagger dropped to the ground. And then, for a fierce, desperate, devilish minute, I had him in my clutch, dragging him nearer the smooth, slippery edge. He was no match for me at this I knew, and he knew; but he held me with the hold of his despair, and I could not loose myself. Both of us together, he meant; but not I. Yet I only freed myself just as he rolled exhausted, but clutching at the tough, short bushes wildly, toward the brink, and partly over it ... Only the hold of his hands between him and his death. And I knelt above him, with the knife in my hand that was stained with her blood. The great yellow face, ashen now in its mortal agony, looked silently up at me — for three or four awful seconds; and then — then it disappeared. "Bah!" Paul concluded, "that was the end of it."

CATHERINE'S QUEST.

IMAGINE to yourself an old, rambling, redbrick house, with odd corners and gables here and there, all bound and clasped together with ivy, and you have Craymoor Grange. It was built long before Queen Elizabeth's time, and that illustrious monarch is said to have slept in it in one of her royal progresses — as where has she not slept?

There still remain some remnants of bygone ages, although it has been much modernized and added to in later days. Among these are the brewhouse and laundry — formerly, it is said, dining-hall and ball-room. The latter of these is chiefly remarkable for an immense arched window, such as you see in churches, with five lights.

When we came to the Grange this window had been partially blocked up, and in front of it, up to one-third of its height, was a wooden dais, or platform, on which stood a cumbrous mangle, left there, I suppose, by the last tenants of the house.

Of these last tenants we knew very little, for it was so long since it had been inhabited that the oldest authority in the village could not remember it.

There were, however, some half-defaced monuments in the village church of Craymoor, bearing the figures and escutcheons of knights and dames of "the old family," as the villagers said; but the inscriptions were worn and almost illegible, and for some time we none of us took the pains to decipher them.

We first came to Craymoor Grange in the summer of 1849, my husband having discovered the place in one of his rambles, and taken a fancy to it. At first I certainly thought we could never make it our home, it was so dilapidated and tumble-down; but by the time winter came on we had had several repairs done and alterations made, and the rooms really became quite presentable.

As our family was small we confined ourselves chiefly to the newest part of the house, leaving the older rooms to the mice, dust, and darkness. We made use of two of the old rooms, however, one as a servants' bedroom and the other as an extra spare chamber, in case of many visitors. For myself, though I hope I am neither nervous nor superstitious, I confess that I would rather sleep in "our wing," as we called the part of the house we inhabited, than in any of the old rooms.

When Catherine l'Estrange came to us, however, during our first Christmas at Craymoor, I found that she was troubled with no such fancies, but declared that she delighted in queer old rooms, with raftered ceilings and deep window-seats, such as ours, and begged to be allowed to occupy the spare chamber. This I readily acceded to, as we had several visitors, and needed all the available rooms.

As my story has principally to do with Catherine l'Estrange, I suppose I ought to speak more fully about her. She was an old school-friend of my daughter Ella, and at the time of which I am speaking was just one-and-twenty, and the merriest girl I ever knew. She had stayed with us once or twice before we came to the Grange, but we then knew no other particulars concerning her family, than that her father had been an Indian officer, and that he and her mother had both died in India when she was about six years old, leaving her to the care of an aunt living in England.

I now, after a long, and I fear a tedious, preamble, come to my story.

On the eve of the new year of 1850, Catherine had a very bad sore throat, and was obliged, though sorely against her inclination, to stay in bed all day, and forego our small evening gayety.

At about 6 o'clock p.m., Ella took her some tea, and fearing she would be dull, offered to stay with her during the evening. This, however, Catherine would not hear of. "You go and entertain your company," said she laughingly, "and leave me to my own devices; I feel very lazy, and I dare say I shall go to sleep." As she had not slept much on the preceding night, Ella thought it was the best thing she could do; so she went out by the door leading on to the corridor, first placing the night-lamp on a table behind the door opening on to the laundry, so that it might not shine in her face.

She did not again visit Catherine's room until reminded to do so by my son George, at about halfpast ten. She then rapped at the door, and receiving no answer, opened it softly, and approached the bed. Catherine lay quite still, and Ella imagined her to be asleep. She therefore returned to the drawingroom without disturbing her.

As it was New Year's eve, we stayed up "to see the old year out and the new year in," and at a few minutes to twelve we all gathered round the open window on the stairs to hear the chimes ring out from the village church.

We were all listening breathlessly as the hall-clock struck twelve, when a piercing cry suddenly echoed through the house, causing us all to start in alarm. I knew that it could only proceed from Catherine's room, for the servants were all assembled at the window beneath us, listening, like ourselves, for the chimes. Thither therefore I flew, followed by Ella, and we found poor Catherine in a truly pitiable state.

She was deadly pale, in an agony of terror, and the perspiration stood in large drops upon her forehead. It was some time before we could succeed at all in composing her, and her first words were to implore us to take her into another room.

She was too weak to stand, so we wrapped her in blankets, and carried her into Ella's bedroom. I noticed that as she was taken through the laundry she shuddered, and put her hands before her eyes. When she was laid on Ella's bed she grew calmer, and apologized for the trouble she had caused, saying that she had had a dreadful dream.

With this explanation we were fain to be content, though I thought it hardly accounted for her excessive terror. I had observed, however, that any allusion to what had passed caused her to tremble and turn pale again, and I thought it best to refrain from exciting her further.

When morning came I found Catherine almost her usual self again; but I persuaded her to remain in bed until the evening, as her cold was not much better. Ella's curiosity to hear the dream which had so much excited her friend could now no longer be restrained; but whenever she asked to hear it, Catherine said, "Not now; another time, perhaps, I may tell you."

When she came down to dinner in the evening, we noticed that she was peculiarly silent, and we endeavored to rally her into her usual spirits, but in vain. She tried to laugh and to appear merry, poor child; but there was evidently something on her mind.

At last, as we all sat round the fire after dinner, she spoke. She addressed herself to my husband, but the tone of her voice caused us all to listen.

"Mr. Fanshawe, I have something to ask of you," said she, and then paused.

"Ask on," said Mr. Fanshawe.

"I know that you will think the request I am going to make a peculiar one; but I have a particular reason for making it," continued she. "It is that you will have the wooden daïs in front of the laundry window removed."

Mr. Fanshawe certainly was taken aback, as were we all. When he had mastered his bewilderment, and assured himself that he had heard aright —

"It is, indeed, a strange request, my dear Catherine," said he; "what can be your reason for asking such a thing?"

"If you will only have it done, and not question me, you will understand my reason," answered Catherine.

Mr. Fanshawe demurred, however, thinking it some foolish whim, and at last Catherine said:

"I must tell you why I wish it done, then: I am sure we shall discover something underneath."

At this we all looked at one another in extreme bewilderment.

"Discover something underneath? No doubt we should — cobwebs, probably, and dust and spiders," answered Mr. Fanshawe, much amused.

But Catherine was not to be laughed down.

"Only do as I wish," said she beseechingly, "and you will see. If you find nothing underneath the daïs but cobwebs and dust, then you may laugh at me as much as you like." And I saw that she was serious, for tears were actually gathering in her eyes. Of course we were all very anxious to know what Catherine expected to find, and how she came to suspect that there was anything to be found; but she would not say, and begged us all not to question her.

And now George took upon himself to interfere.

"Let us do as Catherine wishes, father," said he; "the daïs spoils the laundry, and would be much better away."

"Well, well," said Mr. Fanshawe, "do as you like, only I shall expect my share of the treasure that is found. — And now," added he, "you must have a glass of wine to warm you, Catherine, for you look sadly pale, child."

Here the conversation changed, though we often alluded to the subject again during the evening.

The next morning the first thing in all our thoughts was Catherine's singular request.

I think Mr. Fanshawe had hoped she would have forgotten it, but such was not the case; on the contrary, she enlisted George's services the first thing after breakfast to carry out her design, and they left the room together, accompanied by Ella.

It was a snowy morning, and Mr. Fanshawe was obliged to be away from home all day on business, so I was quite at a loss how to entertain my numerous guests successfully. Happily for me, however, the mystery attendant on the removal of the daïs in the laundry charmed them all; and I have to thank Catherine for contributing to their amusement much better than I could possibly have done.

Not long after the disappearance of Catherine, Ella, and George, a message was sent to us in the drawingroom requesting our presence in the laundry; and on all flocking there with more or less eagerness, we found a fire burning on the old-fashioned hearth and chairs arranged round it.

It appeared that with the help of Sam, our factotum, who was a kind of Jack-of-all-trades, George had succeeded in loosening the planks of the daïs, which, although strongly put together, were rotten and worm-eaten, and that we were now summoned to be witnesses of its removal. We found Catherine trembling with a strange eagerness, and her face quite pale with excitement. This was shared by Ella and George; and, judging by the important expression on their faces, I fancied they were let further into the secret than any one else.

We all sat down in the chairs placed for our accommodation, and the wild whistling of the wind in the huge chimney, together with the sheets of snow which darkened the window-panes, enhanced the mystery of the whole affair, while George and his coadjutor worked lustily on.

At length, after a great deal of panting and puffing, George was heard to exclaim, "Now for the tug of war!" and there followed a minute's pause, and then a crash as the loosened planks were torn asunder, and a cloud of dust enveloped both workmen and spectators.

Involuntarily we all started forward, and a moment of the direst confusion ensued, during which the boys of our party greatly endangered their limbs among the broken boards.

"By George!" exclaimed my son at last — in his eagerness invoking his patron saint — as he stumbled upon something, "there is something here and no mistake;" and, hastily clearing away the rubbish and clinging cobwebs, he disclosed to view what proved on examination to be an immense oaken chest, about four feet in height, heavily carved, and ornamented with brass mouldings corroded with age and damp.

Here was a piece of excitement indeed; never in my most imaginative moments had I thought of anything so mysterious as this. The most sceptical among us grew interested.

"Oh, do open it!" cried Ella, when the first exclamations of surprise were over.

"Easier to say than to do, miss," replied Sam, exerting his Herculean strength in vain. With the aid of a hammer and the kitchen-poker, however, he at last succeeded in forcing it open. We all pressed forward eagerly to peer inside. There was something in it certainly, but we none of us could determine what, until Sam, who was the boldest of us all, thrust in his hand and brought forth — something which caused the bravest to start with horror, while poor Catherine sank down, white and trembling, upon the littered floor. It was a bone, to which adhered fragments of decaying silk.

The consternation and conjectures which followed can be better imagined than described. Seeing the effects of the discovery upon Catherine, and indeed upon all, I bade Sam replace it in the chest, which George closed again, to be left until Mr. Fanshawe came home and could investigate the matter.

The rest of the day I passed in attending to Catherine, who seemed much shocked and overcome by what she had seen, and in trying to divert my guests' thoughts from the subject, and dispel the gloom which had gathered over all. In this I succeeded only partially, and never did I welcome my husband's return more gladly than on that evening.

On his arrival I would not let him be disturbed by the relation of what had happened until he had finished his dinner, and it was not till we were gathered as usual round the fire that George related the whole story to him.

When he ended the two gentlemen left the room together, in order that Mr. Fanshawe might verify by his own eyes what he would hardly believe.

They were some time gone, and on their return I noticed that my husband held in his hand an old piece of soiled parchment, with mouldy seals affixed to it.

"We certainly have discovered much more than I thought for, Catherine," said he, "and possibly more than you thought for either." Here he paused for her to reply, but she did not.

"The bones are most probably those of some animal," added he — I fancied I could detect a certain anxiety in his tone that belied what he said; "but in order to quell the active imaginations which I can see are running away with some of you" — here he looked round with a smile — "I will send for Dr. Driscoll to come and examine them tomorrow. I have also found a piece of parchment in the chest," he added; "but I have not yet looked at its contents."

"Before you do that, Mr. Fanshawe, and before you send for the surgeon," interrupted Catherine suddenly in a clear voice, "I think I can tell you all about the bones found in the chest, and how I guessed them to be there."

"I should certainly be very glad to be told," my husband admitted, much surprised; "though how you can possibly know, I cannot surmise."

"Listen, and I will tell you," answered Catherine; and feeling very glad that our curiosity was at last to be gratified, we all "pricked up our ears," as George would say, to listen.

I here transcribe Catherine's story word for word, as my son George subsequently wrote it down from her dictation.

"You all remember," she began, "my alarming you on New Year's eve at midnight, and that I told you I was disturbed by a dreadful dream.

"I said so because I thought you would make fun of me if I called it a vision; and yet it was much more like a vision, for I seemed to see it waking, and it was more vivid and consecutive than any dream I ever had.

"Before I try to describe it, I want you all to understand that I seemed intuitively to comprehend what I saw, and to recognize all the figures which appeared before me, and their relation to one another, though I am sure I never beheld them before in my life.

"When Ella left me that night, I lay propped up with pillows, staring idly at the strange shadows thrown by the hidden lamp across the laundry ceiling and over the floor. As I looked it seemed to me that a change came over the room — a most unaccountable change.

"Instead of the blocked-up window, the rusty mangle, and the daïs at the farther end, I saw the window clear and distinct from top to bottom, and in front of a deep window-seat at its base stood an oaken chest, exactly corresponding to the one discovered this morning. The room seemed brilliantly lighted, and everything was clearly and distinctly visible; and not only was it changed, but also peopled.

"Many figures passed up and down; brocaded silks swept the floor, and old-world forms of men in strange costumes bowed in courtly style to the dames by their side. Among all these figures I noticed only one couple particularly, and I knew them to be bride and bridegroom. The man was tall and broad, with dark hair and eyes, and a sensual and cruel face. He seemed, however, to be quite enslaved by the woman by his side, whom I hardly even now like to think of, there was something to me so repellent in her presence.

"She was tall and of middle age, and would have been handsome were it not for a sinister expression in her dark flashing eyes, which was enhanced by the black eyebrows which met over them.

"She reminded me irresistibly of the effigy on the stone monument in Craymoor church, which Ella and I named "the wicked woman."

"As I gazed on the strange scene before me I presently became aware of three other figures which I had not noticed before. They were standing in a small arched doorway in one corner of the room (where the servants' bedroom now is) furtively watching the gay company. One was a pale, careworn woman, apparently of about five-and-thirty, still beautiful, though haggard and mournful-looking, with blue eyes and a fair complexion.

"Her hands rested on the shoulders of two children, one a boy and the other a girl, of about ten and eleven years of age respectively. They much resembled their mother, and, like her, they were meanly dressed, though no poverty of attire could hide the nobility of their aspect. I noticed that the mother's eyes rested chiefly on the face of the tall stately man before mentioned, who seemed unaware or careless of her presence; and instinctively I knew him to be the father of her children and the blighter of her life.

"As I looked and beheld all this, the lights vanished, the company disappeared, and the room became dark and deserted. No, not quite deserted, for I presently distinguished, seated on the window-seat by the old oaken chest, the fair woman and her children again.

"The moonlight now streamed through the window upon the woman's face, making it appear more ghastly and haggard than before. In her long thin fingers she was holding up to the light a necklace of large pearls, curiously interwoven in a diamond pattern, and on this the children's eyes were fixed.

"She then hung it on the girl's fair neck, who hid it in her bosom. Both children then twined their arms round their mother and kissed her repeatedly, while her head sank lower and lower, and the paleness of death overspread her features.

"This scene faded away as the other had done, and I saw the fair woman no more.

"Then it seemed to me that many figures passed and repassed before the window — the wicked woman (as I shall call her to distinguish her), accompanied by a boy the image of herself, whom I knew to be her son. He was apparently older than the fair-haired children, who also passed to and fro, attired as servants, and generally employed in some menial work.

"At last the wicked woman's son, with haughty gestures, ordered the other boy to pick up something that lay on the ground, and when he refused, he raised his cane as though to strike him. Before he could do so, however, the boy flew at him, and they engaged in a fierce struggle.

"In the midst of this the wicked woman, whom I had learned to dread, came forward and separated them; after which she pointed imperiously to the door, and signed to the younger boy to go out.

"He obeyed her mandate, but first threw his arms round his sister in a last embrace, and she detached the pearl necklace from off her neck and gave it to him. He then went out, waving a last adieu to her, and I saw him no more.

"Confused images seemed to crowd before me after this, and I remember nothing clearly until I beheld an infirm and tottering figure led away through the arched doorway, in whom I recognized the tall and stately man I had first seen in company with the wicked woman, but who was now an old man, apparently being supported to his bed to die. As he passed out he laid one trembling hand upon the head of the fair girl, now a blooming woman, and a softer shade came over his face. This the wicked woman noted, and she marked her disapproval by a vindictive frown.

"She also was older-looking, but age had in no degree softened her features; on the contrary, they appeared to me to wear a harsher expression than before.

"In the next scene which came before me, the wicked woman's son was evidently making love to the girl. Both were standing by the old window-seat, but her face was resolutely turned away from him, and when she at last looked at him it was with an expression of uncontrollable horror and dislike.

"Again this scene changed as those before it had done; the young man was gone, and only the light of a grated lantern illumined the room, or rather made darkness visible. The wicked woman was the only occupant of the laundry; she was kneeling by the oaken chest, trying to raise the heavy lid. In her left hand she held a piece of parchment, with large red seals pendent from it. I knew it to be the old man's will which she was hiding, thus defrauding the just claimants of their rights.

"Her hands trembled, and her whole appearance denoted guilty trepidation. At length, however, the lid was raised, but just as she was about to replace the parchment in the chest, a figure glided silently from a dark corner of the window-seat and confronted her. It was the fair girl, pale, resolute, and extending her hand to claim the will.

"After the first guilty start, which caused her to drop the parchment into the chest, the wicked woman hurriedly tried to close the lid. Her efforts were frustrated, however, by the girl, who leaned with all her force upon it, keeping it back, and still held out her hand as before.

"There followed a pause, which seemed to me very long, but which could in reality have only lasted a minute.

"It was broken by the wicked woman, who, hastily casting a glance behind her into the gloom of the darkened chamber, then seized the girl by the arm and dragged her with all her force into the chest. It was but the work of a moment, for the woman was much the more powerful of the two, and the poor victim was too much taken by surprise to make much resistance. I saw one despairing look in her face as her murderess flashed the lantern before it with a hideous gleam of triumph.

"Then the lid was pressed down upon her, and I saw no more, only I felt an unutterable terror, and tried in vain to scream.

"This was not all the vision, however, for before I had mastered my terror the scene was superseded by another.

"This time it was twilight, and the wicked woman and her son were together. The son seemed to be talking eagerly, and grew more and more excited, while the mother stood still and erect, with a malicious smile upon her lips. Presently she moved toward the chest with a fell purpose in her eyes, unlocked it with a key which hung from her girdle, raised the lid and disclosed the contents.

"I understood it all now: the son was asking for the girl whom he had loved, and whom on his return home he missed, and the wicked woman, enraged at hearing for the first time that he had loved her, was determined to have her revenge.

"He should see her again.

"On beholding the dread contents of the chest, the man staggered back horrified; then, doubtless comprehending the case, he turned suddenly upon the murderess, and threw his arm around her, and there ensued a struggle terrible to witness.

"Her proud triumphant glance of malice was now succeeded by one of abject fear, and, as his strength began to gain the mastery, of despair.

"His iron frame heaved for a moment with the violence of his efforts, the next he had forced her down into the chest upon the mouldering body of her victim. I saw her eyes light up with the terror of death for one second, and then her screams were stifled forever beneath the massive lid.

"The horror of this scene was too much for me; I found voice to scream at last, and I suppose it was my cry which alarmed you all."

When Catherine ceased speaking there was a profound silence for a minute, which Mr. Fanshawe was the first to break as he said with a peculiar intonation in his voice, "It is very strange, very unaccountable," reëchoing all our thoughts.

Now it happened that Mr. Fleet, our family lawyer, was among our guests that Christmas-time, and since the discovery of the chest and bones had taken a great interest in the whole affair. He now questioned and cross-questioned Catherine, and seemed quite satisfied with the result.

"This would have made a fine case," said he, "if only it had been a question of the right of succession, for any lawyer to make out; but unfortunately the events are too long past to have any bearing upon the present." (There Mr. Fleet was wrong, though we none of us knew it at the time.)

We now all launched forth into conjectures and opinions, during which Catherine lay still and weary upon the sofa. I saw this, and thought it quite time to put an end to the day's adventures by suggesting a retirement for the night, and we were soon all dispersed to dream of the mysterious vision and discovery.

I think we were none of us sorry when morning dawned without any further tragedy (by *us*, I mean the female part of the establishment).

When I came down to breakfast I found Mr. Fleet very active on the subject of the night before.

"A surgeon ought to be immediately sent for to pronounce an opinion on the contents of the chest," he said; and Dr. Driscoll presently came, and after examining the bones minutely, decided that they were, as we thought, those of two females, who might have been from one to two hundred years dead.

Mr. Fleet next offered to decipher the will, for such he imagined the parchment to be, and he and Mr. Fanshawe were closeted together for some time.

When they at last appeared again, they looked much interested and excited, and led me away to inform me of the result of their examination.

They told me that the document had proved to be a will, but that there was a circumstance connected with it which greatly added to the mystery of the whole business. This was the mention of the name of L'Estrange. I was, of course, as much surprised as they, and heard the will read with great interest.

I cannot remember the technical terms in which it was expressed. Mr. Fleet read me the translation he had made, for the original was in old English; but it was to this effect:

It purported to be the will of Reginald, Viscount St. Aubyn, in which he bequeathed all his inheritance to his lawful son Francis St. Aubyn — commonly known by the name of Francis l'Estrange — and to his heirs forever. It was signed Reginald, Viscount St. Aubyn, and the witnesses were John Murray and Phoebe Brett, who in the old copy had each affixed their mark.

Mr. Fleet affirmed that it was a perfectly legal document, but this was not all it contained.

There was an appendix which our lawyer translated as follows:

"In order to avoid all disputes and doubts which might otherwise arise, I do hereby declare that my lawful wife was Editha, youngest daughter of Francis l'Estrange, Baronet, and that the register of our marriage may be seen in the church of St. Andrew, Haslet. By this marriage we had two children, a son Francis, and a daughter Catherine, commonly called Francis and Catherine l'Estrange. And I hereby declare that Agatha Thornhaugh was not legally married to me as she imagined, my lawful wife being alive at the time; neither do I leave to her son by her first husband, Ralph Thornhaugh, any part or share in my inheritance."

Both the will and the writing at the foot of it were dated the 14th of May, 1668.

This accumulation of mysteries caused me for a time to feel quite bewildered and unable to think, but Mr. Fleet was in his element.

"Here is a case worth entering into," said he, and he further went on to state that he had no doubt that the L'Estranges mentioned in the will were our Catherine's ancestors, the Christian names being similar rendering it more than probable. She was most likely a direct descendant of Francis l'Estrange, the heir mentioned in the will, who was no doubt also the fair-haired boy Catherine had seen in her vision.

The bones were those of his sister, the murdered Catherine l'Estrange, and of her murderess Agatha Thornhaugh, herself immured by her own son; but the matter ought not to rest on mere surmise, and the first place to go to for corroborating evidence was Craymoor church.

The rapidity with which Mr. Fleet came to his conclusions increased my bewilderment, and I was at a loss to know what evidence he expected to gain from Craymoor church. He reminded me, however, of Catherine's statement that "the wicked woman" of her vision resembled the effigy on the monument there.

Thither, then, the lawyer repaired, accompanied by Mr. Fanshawe and George. It was thought best to keep the sequel of the story from Catherine and the others until it was explained more fully, as Mr. Fleet boldly affirmed it should be. I awaited anxiously the result of their researches, and they exceeded I think even our good investigator's hopes.

Not only had they deciphered the inscription round the old monument, but with leave from the clergyman and the assistance of the sexton they had disinterred the coffin and found it to be filled with stones.

I am aware that this was rather an illegal proceeding, but as Mr. Fleet was only acting *en amateur* and not professionally, he did not stick at trifles.

The inscription was in Latin, and stated that the tomb was erected in memory of Agatha, wife of Reginald, Viscount St. Aubyn, who was buried beneath, and who died on the 31st day of December, 1649 — exactly two hundred years before the day on which Catherine had seen the vision.

I could not help thinking it shocking that the villagers had for two centuries been worshipping in the presence of a perpetual lie, but Mr. Fleet thought only of the grand corroboration of his "case." He applied to Mr. Fanshawe to take the next step, namely, to write to Catherine's aunt and only living relative, to tell her the whole story, and beg her to assist in elucidating matters by giving all the information she could respecting the L'Estrange family.

This was done, and we anxiously awaited the answer. Meantime, all my guests were clamorous to hear the contents of the will, and I had to appease them as best I could, by promising that they should know all soon.

In a few days, old Miss l'Estrange's answer came. She said her brother, father, and grandfather had all served in India, and that she believed her great-grandfather, who was a Francis l'Estrange, to have passed most of his life abroad, there having been a cloud over his early youth. What this was, however, she could not say. She affirmed that the L'Estranges had in old times resided in — shire; and she further stated that her father's family had consisted of herself and her brother, whose only child Catherine was.

This was certainly not much information, but it was enough for our purpose. We no longer remained in doubt as to the truth of Mr. Fleet's version of the story, and when he himself told it to all our family-party one evening, every one agreed that he had certainly succeeded in making out a very clever case.

As for Catherine, on being told that the figures she had beheld in the vision were thought to be those of her ancestors, she was not so much surprised as I expected, but said that she had had a presentiment all along that the tragedies she had witnessed were in some way connected with her own family.

I must not forget to say that on ascertaining that the parish church of Haslet was still standing, we searched the register, and another link of evidence was made clear by the finding of the looked-for entry.

There remains little more to be told. The charge of the old will was committed to Mr. Fleet, and Catherine's story has been carefully laid up among the archives of our family. I say advisedly of *our* family, for the line of the L'Estranges, alias St. Aubyns, has been united to ours by the marriage of Catherine to my son George, which took place in 1850.

I who write this am an old woman now, but I still live with my son and daughter-in-law.

George has bought Craymoor Grange, thus rendering justice after the lapse of two centuries, and restoring the inheritance of her fathers to the rightful owner.

I have but one more incident to relate, and I have done. A short time ago, old Miss l'Estrange died, bequeathing all her worldly possessions to Catherine. Among these were some old family relics. Catherine was looking over them as George unpacked them, and she presently came to a miniature of a young and beautiful girl with fair hair and blue eyes, and a wistful expression, and with it a necklace of pearls strung in a diamond pattern. On seeing these she became suddenly grave, and handing them to me, said: "They are the same; the young girl, and the pearl necklace I told you of." No more was said at the time, for the children were present, and we had always avoided alluding to the horrible family tragedy before them; but if we had still retained any doubt about its truth — which we had not — this would have set it at rest.

If you were to visit Craymoor Grange now, you would find no old laundry. The part of the house containing it has been pulled down, and children play and chickens peckett on the ground where it once stood.

The oaken chest has also long since been destroyed.

HAUNTED.

SOME few years ago one of those great national conventions which draw together all ages and conditions of the sovereign people of America was held in Charleston, South Carolina.

Colonel Demarion, one of the State Representatives, had attended that great national convention; and, after an exciting week, was returning home, having a long and difficult journey before him.

A pair of magnificent horses, attached to a light buggy, flew merrily enough over a rough-country for a while; but toward evening stormy weather reduced the roads to a dangerous condition, and compelled the Colonel to relinquish his purpose of reaching home that night, and to stop at a small wayside tavern, whose interior, illuminated by blazing wood-fires, spread a glowing halo among the dripping trees as he approached it, and gave promise of warmth and shelter at least.

Drawing up to this modest dwelling, Colonel Demarion saw through its uncurtained windows that there was no lack of company within. Beneath the trees, too, an entanglement of rustic vehicles, giving forth red gleams from every dripping angle, told him that beasts as well as men were cared for. At the open door appeared the form of a man, who, at the sound of wheels, but not seeing in the outside darkness whom he addressed, called out, "'Tain't no earthly use a-stoppin' here."

Caring more for his chattels than for himself, the Colonel paid no further regard to this address than to call loudly for the landlord.

At the tone of authority, the man in outline more civilly announced himself to be the host; yet so far from inviting the traveller to alight, insisted that the house was "as full as it could pack;" but that there was a place a little farther down the road where the gentleman would be certain to find excellent accommodation.

"What stables have you here?" demanded the traveller, giving no more heed to this than to the former announcement; but bidding his servant to alight, and preparing to do so himself.

"Stables!" repeated the baffled host, shading his eyes so as to scrutinize the newcomer, "*stables*, Cap'n?"

"Yes, *stables*. I want you to take care of my horses; I can take care of myself. Some shelter for cattle you must have by the look of these traps," pointing to the wagons. "I don't want my horses to be kept standing out in this storm, you know."

"No, Major. Why no, cert'n'y; Marion's ain't over a mile, and — —"

"Conf — !" muttered the Colonel; "but it's over the *river*, which I don't intend to ford tonight under any consideration."

So saying, the Colonel leaped to the ground, directing his servant to cover the horses and then get out his valise; while the host, thus defeated, assumed the best grace he could to say that he would see what could be done "for the *horses*."

"I am a soldier, my man," added the Colonel in a milder tone, as he stamped his cold feet on the porch and shook off the rain from his travelling-gear; "I am used to rough fare and a hard couch: all we want is shelter. A corner of the floor will suffice for me and my rug; a private room I can dispense with at such times as these."

The landlord seemed no less relieved at this assurance than mollified by the explanation of a traveller whom he now saw was of a very different stamp from those who usually frequented the tavern. "For the matter of *stables*, his were newly put up, and first-rate," he said; and "cert'n'y the Gen'ral was welcome to a seat by the fire while 'twas a-storming so fierce."

Colonel Demarion gave orders to his servant regarding the horses, while the landlord, kicking at what seemed to be a bundle of sacking down behind the door, shouted— "Jo! Ho, Jo! Wake up, you sleepy-headed nigger! Be alive, boy, and show this gentleman's horses to the stables." Upon a repetition of which charges a tall, gaunt, dusky figure lifted itself from out of the dark corner, and grew taller and more gaunt as it stretched itself into waking with a grin which was the most visible part of it, by reason of two long rows of ivory gleaming in the red glare. The hard words had fallen as harmless on Jo's ear-drum as the kicks upon his impassive frame. To do Jo's master justice, the kicks were not vicious kicks, and the rough language was but an intimation that dispatch was needed. Very much of the spaniel's nature had Jo; and as he rolled along the passage to fetch a lantern, his mouth expanded into a still broader grin at the honor of attending so stately a gentleman. Quick, like his master, too, was Jo to discriminate between "real gentlefolks" and the "white trash" whose rough-coated, rope-harnessed mules were the general occupants of his stables.

"Splendid pair, sir," said the now conciliating landlord. "Shove some o' them mules out into the shed, Jo (which your horses 'll feel more to hum in my new stalls, Gen'ral)."

Again cautioning his man Plato not to leave them one moment, Colonel Demarion turned to enter the house.

"You'll find a rough crowd in here, sir," said the host, as he paused on the threshold; "but a good fire, anyhow. 'Tain't many of these loafers as understand this convention business — I *presume*, Gen'ral, you've attended the convention — they all on 'em *thinks* they does, tho'. Fact most on 'em thinks they'd orter be on the committee theirselves. Good many on 'em is from Char'ston to-day, but is in the same fix as yerself, Gen'ral — can't get across the river tonight."

"I see, I see," cried the statesman, with a gesture toward the sitting-room. "Now what have you got in your larder, Mr. Landlord? and send some supper out to my servant; he must make a bed of the carriage-mats tonight."

The landlord introduced his guest into a room filled chiefly with that shiftless and noxious element of Southern society known as "mean whites." Pipes and drinks, and excited arguments, engaged these people as they stood or sat in groups. The host addressed those who were gathered round the log-fire, and they opened a way for the newcomer, some few, with republican freedom, inviting him to be seated, the rest giving one furtive glance, and then, in antipathy born of envy, skulking away.

The furniture of this comfortless apartment consisted of sloppy, much-jagged deal tables, dirty whittled benches, and a few uncouth chairs. The walls were dirty with accumulated tobacco stains, and so moist and filthy was the floor, that the sound only of scraping seats and heavy footsteps told that it was of boards and not bare earth.

Seated with his back toward the majority of the crowd, and shielded by his newspaper, Colonel Demarion sat awhile unobserved; but was presently recognized by a man from his own immediate neighborhood, when the information was quickly whispered about that no less a person than their distinguished Congressman was among them.

This piece of news speedily found its way to the ears of the landlord, to whom Colonel Demarion was known by name only, and forthwith he reappeared to overwhelm the representative of his State with apologies for the uncourteous reception which had been given him, and to express his now very sincere regrets that the house offered no suitable accommodation for the gentleman. Satisfied as to the safety of his chattels, the Colonel generously dismissed the idea of having anything either to resent or to forgive; and assured the worthy host that he would accept of no exclusive indulgences.

In spite of which the landlord bustled about to bring in a separate table, on which he spread a clean coarse cloth, and a savory supper of broiled ham, hot corncakes, and coffee; every few minutes stopping to renew his apologies, and even appearing to grow confidentially communicative regarding his domestic economies; until the hungry traveller cut him short with "Don't say another word about it, my friend; you have not a spare sleeping-room, and that is enough. Find me a corner — a clean corner" — looking round upon the most unclean corners of that room — "perhaps upstairs somewhere, and — —"

"Ah! *upsta'rs*, Gen'ral. Now, that's jest what I had in my mind to ax you. Fact is ther' *is* a spar' room upsta'rs, as comfortable a room as the best of folks can wish; but — —"

"But it's crammed with sleeping folks, so there's an end of it," cried the senator, thoroughly bored.

"No, sir, ain't no person in it; and ther' ain't no person likely to be in it 'cept 'tis *yerself*, Colonel Demarion. Leastways — —"

After a good deal of hesitation and embarrassment, the host, in mysterious whispers, imparted the startling fact that this most desirable sleeping room was *haunted*; that the injury he had sustained in consequence had compelled him to fasten it up altogether; that he had come to be very suspicious of admitting strangers, and had limited his custom of late to what the bar could supply, keeping the matter hushed up in the hope that it might be the sooner forgotten by the neighbors; but that in the case of Colonel Demarion he had now made bold to mention it; "as I can't but think, sir," he urged, "you'd find it prefer'ble to sleepin' on the floor or sittin' up all night along ov these loafers. Fer if 'tis any deceivin' trick got up in the house, maybe they won't try it on, sir, to a gentleman of your reputation."

Colonel Demarion became interested in the landlord's confidences, but could only gather in further explanation that for some time past all travellers who had occupied that room had "made off in the middle of the night, never showin' their faces at the inn again;" that on endeavoring to arrest one or more in their nocturnal flight, they — all more or less terrified — had insisted on escaping without a moment's delay, assigning no other reason than that they had seen a ghost. "Not that folks seem to get much harm by it, Colonel — not by the way they makes off without paying a cent of money!"

Great indeed was the satisfaction evinced by the victim of unpaid bills on the Colonel's declaring that the haunted chamber was the very room for him. "If to be turned out of my bed at midnight is all I have to fear, we will see who comes off master in my case. So, Mr. Landlord, let the chamber be got ready directly, and have a good fire built there at once."

The exultant host hurried away to confide the great news to Jo, and with him to make the necessary preparations. "Come what will, Jo, Colonel Demarion ain't the man to make off without paying down good money for his accommodations."

In reasonable time, Colonel Demarion was beckoned out of the public room, and conducted upstairs by the landlord, who, after receiving a cheerful "goodnight," paused on the landing to hear his guest bolt and bar the door within, and then push a piece of furniture against it. "Ah," murmured the host, as a sort of misgiving came over him, "if a apparishum has a mind to come thar, 'tain't all the bolts and bars in South Carolina as 'll kip'en away."

But the Colonel's precaution of securing his door, as also that of placing his revolvers in readiness, had not the slightest reference to the reputed ghost. Spiritual disturbances of such kind he feared not. Spirits *tangible* were already producing ominous demonstrations in the rooms below, nor was it possible to conjecture what troubles these might evolve. Glad enough to escape from the noisy company, he took a survey of his evil-reputed chamber. The only light was that of the roaring, crackling, blazing wood-fire, and no other was needed. And what storm-benighted traveller, when fierce winds and rains are lashing around his lodging, can withstand the cheering influences of a glorious log-fire? especially if, as in that wooden tenement, that fire be of abundant pine-knots. It rivals the glare of gas and the glow of a furnace; it charms away the mustiness and fustiness of years, and causes all that is dull and dead around to laugh and dance in its bright light.

By the illumination of just such a fire, Colonel Demarion observed that the apartment offered nothing worthier of remark than that the furniture was superior to anything that might be expected in a small wayside tavern. In truth, the landlord had expended a considerable sum in fitting up this, his finest chamber, and had therefore sufficient reason to bemoan its unprofitableness.

Having satisfied himself as to his apparent security, the senator thought no more of spirits palpable or impalpable; but to the far graver issues of the convention his thoughts reverted. It was yet early; he lighted a cigar, and in full appreciation of his retirement, took out his notebook and plunged into the affairs of state. Now and then he was recalled to the circumstances of his situation by the swaggering tread of unsteady feet about the house, or when the boisterous shouts below raged above the outside storm; but even then he only glanced up from his papers to congratulate himself upon his agreeable seclusion.

Thus he sat for above an hour, then he heaped fresh logs upon the hearth, looked again to his revolvers, and retired to rest.

The house-clock was striking twelve as the Colonel awoke. He awoke suddenly from a sound sleep, flashing, as it were, into full consciousness, his mind and memory clear, all his faculties invigorated, his ideas undisturbed, but with a perfect conviction that he was not alone.

He lifted his head. A man was standing a few feet from the bed, and between it and the fire, which was still burning, and burning brightly enough to display every object in the room, and to define the outline of the intruder clearly. His dress also and his features were plainly distinguishable: the dress was a travelling-costume, in fashion somewhat out of date; the features wore a mournful and distressed expression — the eyes were fixed upon the Colonel. The right arm hung down, and the hand, partially concealed, might, for aught the Colonel knew, be grasping one of his own revolvers; the left arm was folded against the waist. The man seemed about to advance still closer to the bed, and returned the occupant's gaze with a fixed stare.

"Stand, or I'll fire!" cried the Colonel, taking in all this at a glance, and starting up in his bed, revolver in hand.

The man remained still.

"What is your business here?" demanded the statesman, thinking he was addressing one of the roughs from below.

The man was silent.

"Leave this room, if you value your life," shouted the indignant soldier, pointing his revolver.

The man was motionless.

"Retire! or by heaven I'll send a bullet through you!"

But the man moved not an inch.

The Colonel fired. The bullet lodged in the breast of the stranger, but he started not. The soldier leaped to the floor and fired again. The shot entered the heart, pierced the body, and lodged in the wall beyond; and the Colonel beheld the hole where the bullet had entered, and the firelight glimmering through it. And yet the intruder stirred not. Astounded, the Colonel dropped his revolver, and stood face to face before the unmoved man.

"Colonel Demarion," spake the deep solemn voice of the perforated stranger, "in vain you shoot me — I am dead already."

The soldier, with all his bravery, gasped, spellbound. The firelight gleamed through the hole in the body, and the eyes of the shooter were riveted there.

"Fear nothing," spake the mournful presence; "I seek but to divulge my wrongs. Until my death shall be avenged my unquiet spirit lingers here. Listen."

Speechless, motionless was the statesman; and the mournful apparition thus slowly and distinctly continued:

"Four years ago I travelled with one I trusted. We lodged here. That night my comrade murdered me. He plunged a dagger into my heart while I slept. He covered the wound with a plaster. He feigned to mourn my death. He told the people here I had died of heart complaint; that I had long been ailing. I had gold and treasures. With my treasure secreted beneath his garments he paraded mock grief at my grave. Then he departed. In distant parts he sought to forget his crime; but his stolen gold brought him only the curse of an evil conscience. Rest and peace are not for him. He now prepares to leave his native land forever. Under an assumed name that man is this night in Charleston. In a few hours he will sail for Europe. Colonel Demarion, you must prevent it. Justice and humanity demand that a murderer roam not at large, nor squander more of the wealth that is by right my children's."

The spirit paused. To the extraordinary revelation the Colonel had listened in rapt astonishment. He gazed at the presence, at the firelight glimmering through it — through the very place where a human heart would be — and he felt that he was indeed in the presence of a supernatural being. He thought of the landlord's story; but while earnestly desiring to sift the truth of the mystery, words refused to come to his aid.

"Do you hesitate?" said the mournful spirit. "Will *you* also flee, when my orphan children cry for retribution?" Seeming to anticipate the will of the Colonel, "I await your promise, senator," he said. "There is no time to lose."

With a mighty effort, the South Carolinian said, "I promise. What would you have me do?"

In the same terse, solemn manner, the ghostly visitor gave the real and assumed names of the murderer, described his person and dress at the present time, described a certain curious ring he was then wearing, together with other distinguishing characteristics: all being carefully noted down by Colonel Demarion, who, by degrees, recovered his self-possession, and pledged himself to use every endeavor to bring the murderer to justice.

Then, with a portentous wave of the hand, "It is well," said the apparition. "Not until the spirit of my murderer shall be separated from the mortal clay can *my* spirit rest in peace." And vanished.

Halfpast six in the morning was the appointed time for the steamer to leave Charleston; and the Colonel lost not a moment in preparing to depart. As he hurried down the stairs he encountered the landlord, who — his eyes rolling in terror — made an attempt to speak. Unheeding, except to demand his carriage, the Colonel pushed past him, and effected a quick escape toward the back premises, shouting lustily for "Jo" and "Plato," and for his carriage to be got ready immediately. A few minutes more, and the bewildered host was recalled to the terrible truth by the noise of the carriage dashing through the yard and away down the road; and it was some miles nearer Charleston before the unfortunate man ceased to peer after it in the darkness — as if by so doing he could recover damages — and bemoan to Jo the utter ruin of his house and hopes.

Thirty miles of hard driving had to be accomplished in little more than five hours. No great achievement under favorable circumstances; but the horses were only half refreshed from their yesterday's journey, and though the storm was over, the roads were in a worse condition than ever.

Colonel Demarion resolved to be true to his promise; and fired by a curiosity to investigate the extraordinary communication which had been revealed to him, urged on his horses, and reached the wharf at Charleston just as the steamer was being loosed from her moorings.

He hailed her. "Stop her! Business with the captain! Stop her!"

Her machinery was already in motion; her iron lungs were puffing forth dense clouds of smoke and steam; and as the Colonel shouted — the crowd around, from sheer delight in shouting, echoing his "Stop her! stop her!" — the voices on land were confounded with the voices of the sailors, the rattling of chains, and the haulings of ropes.

Among the passengers standing to wave farewells to their friends on the wharf were some who recognised Colonel Demarion, and drew the captain's attention toward him; and as he continued vehemently to gesticulate, that officer, from his post of observation, demanded the nature of the business which should require the ship's detention. Already the steamer was clear of the wharf. In another minute she might be beyond reach of the voice; therefore, failing by gestures and entreaties to convince the captain of the importance of his errand, Colonel Demarion, in desperation, cried at the top of his voice, "A murderer on board! For God's sake, stop!" He wished to have made this startling declaration in private, but not a moment was to be lost; and the excitement around him was intense.

In the midst of the confusion another cry of "Man overboard!" might have been heard in a distant part of the ship, had not the attention of the crowd been fastened on the Colonel. Such a cry was, however, uttered, offering a still more urgent motive for stopping; and the steamer being again made fast, Colonel Demarion was received on board.

"Let not a soul leave the vessel!" was his first and prompt suggestion; and the order being issued he drew the captain aside, and concisely explained his grave commission. The captain thereupon conducted him to his private room, and summoned the steward, before whom the details were given, and the description of the murderer was read over. The steward, after considering attentively, seemed inclined to associate the description with that of a passenger whose remarkably dejected appearance had

already attracted his observation. In such a grave business it was, however, necessary to proceed with the utmost caution, and the "passenger-book" was produced. Upon reference to its pages, the three gentlemen were totally dismayed by the discovery that the name of this same dejected individual was that under which, according to the apparition, the murderer had engaged his passage.

"I am here to charge that man with murder," said Colonel Demarion. "He must be arrested."

Horrified as the captain was at this astounding declaration, yet, on account of the singular and unusual mode by which the Colonel had become possessed of the facts, and the impossibility of proving the charge, he hesitated in consenting to the arrest of a passenger. The steward proposed that they should repair to the saloons and deck, and while conversing with one or another of the passengers, mention — as it were casually — in the hearing of the suspected party his own proper name, and observe the effect produced on him. To this they agreed, and without loss of time joined the passengers, assigning some feasible cause for a short delay of the ship.

The saloon was nearly empty, and while the steward went below, the other two repaired to the deck, where they observed a crowd gathered seaward, apparently watching something over the ship's side.

During the few minutes which had detained the captain in this necessarily hurried business, a boat had been lowered, and some sailors had put off in her to rescue the person who was supposed to have fallen overboard; and it was only now, on joining the crowd, that the captain learned the particulars of the accident. "Who was it?" "What was he like?" they exclaimed simultaneously. That a man had fallen overboard was all that could be ascertained. Some one had seen him run across the deck, looking wildly about him. A splash in the water had soon afterward attracted attention to the spot, and a body had since been seen struggling on the surface. The waves were rough after the storm, and thick with seaweed, and the sailors had as yet missed the body. The two gentlemen took their post among the watchers, and kept their eyes intently upon the waves, and upon the sailors battling against them. Ere long they see the body rise again to the surface. Floated on a powerful wave, they can for the few moments breathlessly scrutinize it. The color of the dress is observed. A face of agony upturned displays a peculiar contour of forehead; the hair, the beard; and now he struggles — an arm is thrown up, and a remarkable ring catches the Colonel's eye. "Great heavens! The whole description tallies!" The sailors pull hard for the spot, the next stroke and they will rescue ——

A monster shark is quicker than they. The sea is tinged with blood. The man is no more!

Shocked and silent, Colonel Demarion and the captain quitted the deck and resummoned the steward, who had, but without success, visited the berths and various parts of the ship for the individual in question. Every hole and corner was now, by the captain's order carefully searched, but in vain; and as no further information concerning the missing party could be obtained, and the steward persisted in his statement regarding his general appearance, they proceeded to examine his effects. In these he was identified beyond a doubt. Papers and relics proved not only his guilt but his remorse; remorse which, as the apparition had said, permitted him no peace in his wanderings.

Those startling words, "A murderer on board!" had doubtless struck fresh terror to his heart and, unable to face the accusation, he had thus terminated his wretched existence.

Colonel Demarion revisited the little tavern, and on several occasions occupied the haunted chamber; but never again had he the honor of receiving a midnight commission from a ghostly visitor, and never again had the landlord to bemoan the flight of a non-paying customer.

PICHON & SONS OF THE CROIX ROUSSE.

GIRAUDIER, *pharmacien, première classe*, is the legend, recorded in huge, ill-proportioned letters, which directs the attention of the stranger to the most prosperous-looking shop in the grand *place* of La Croix Rousse, a well-known suburb of the beautiful city of Lyons, which has its share of the shabby gentility and poor pretence common to the suburban commerce of great towns.

Giraudier is not only *pharmacien* but *propriétaire*, though not by inheritance; his possession of one of the prettiest and most prolific of the small vineyards in the beautiful suburb, and a charming inconvenient house, with low ceilings, liliputian bedrooms, and a profusion of *persiennes, jalousies, and contrevents*, comes by purchase. This enviable little *terre* was sold by the Nation, when that terrible abstraction transacted the public business of France; and it was bought very cheaply by the strong-minded father of the Giraudier of the present, who was not disturbed by the evil reputation which the place had gained, at a time the peasants of France, having been bullied into a renunciation of religion, eagerly cherished superstition. The Giraudier of the present cherishes the particular superstition in question affectionately; it reminds him of an uncommonly good bargain made in his favor, which is always a pleasant association of ideas, especially to a Frenchman, still more especially to a Lyonnais; and it attracts strangers to his *pharmacie*, and leads to transactions in *Grand Chartreuse* and *Crème de Roses*, ensuing naturally on the narration of the history of Pichon & Sons. Giraudier is not of aristocratic principles and sympathies; on the contrary, he has decided republican leanings, and considers *Le Progrès* a masterpiece of journalistic literature; but, as he says simply and strongly, "it is not because a man is a marquis that one is not to keep faith with him; a bad action is not good because it harms a good-for-nothing of a noble; the more when that good-for-nothing is no longer a noble, but *pour rire*." At the easy price of acquiescence in these sentiments, the stranger hears one of the most authentic, best-remembered, most popular of the many traditions of the bad old times "before General Bonaparte," as Giraudier, who has no sympathy with any later designation of *le grand homme*, calls the Emperor, whose statue one can perceive — a speck in the distance — from the threshold of the *pharmacie*.

The Marquis de Sénanges, in the days of the triumph of the great Revolution, was fortunate enough to be out of France, and wise enough to remain away from that country, though he persisted, long after the old *régime* was as dead as the Ptolemies, in believing it merely suspended, and the Revolution a lamentable accident of vulgar complexion, but happily temporary duration. The Marquis de Sénanges, who affected the *style régence*, and was the politest of infidels and the most refined of voluptuaries, got on indifferently in inappreciative foreign parts; but the members of his family — his brother and sisters, two of whom were guillotined, while the third escaped to Savoy and found refuge there in a convent of her order — got on exceedingly ill in France. If the *ci-devant* Marquis had had plenty of money to expend in such feeble imitations of his accustomed pleasures as were to be had out of Paris, he would not have been much affected by the fate of his relatives. But money became exceedingly scarce; the Marquis had actually beheld many of his peers reduced to the necessity of earning the despicable but indispensable article after many ludicrous fashions. And the duration of this absurd upsetting of law, order, privilege, and property began to assume unexpected and very unpleasant proportions.

The Château de Sénanges, with its surrounding lands, was confiscated to the Nation, during the third year of the "emigration" of the Marquis de Sénanges; and the greater part of the estate was purchased by a thrifty, industrious, and rich *avocat*, named Prosper Alix, a widower with an only daughter. Prosper Alix enjoyed the esteem of the entire neighborhood. First, he was rich; secondly, he was of a taciturn disposition, and of a neutral tint in politics. He had done well under the old *régime* and, he was doing well under the new — thank God, or the Supreme Being, or the First Cause, or the goddess Reason herself, for all; — he would have invoked Dagon, Moloch, or Kali, quite as readily as the Saints and the Madonna, who has gone so utterly out of fashion of late. Nobody was afraid to speak out before Prosper Alix; he was not a spy; and though a cold-hearted man, except in the instance of his only daughter, he never harmed anybody.

Very likely it was because he was the last person in the vicinity whom anybody would have suspected of being applied to by the dispossessed family, that the son of the Marquis' brother, a young man of promise, of courage, of intellect, and of morals of decidedly a higher calibre than those actually and traditionally imputed to the family, sought the aid of the new possessor of the Château de Sénanges, which had changed its old title for that of the Maison Alix. The father of M. Paul de Sénanges had perished in the September massacres; his mother had been guillotined at Lyons; and he — who had been saved by the interposition of a young comrade, whose father had, in the wonderful rotations of the wheel of Fate, acquired authority in the place where he had once esteemed the notice of the nephew of the Marquis a crowning honor for his son — had passed through the common vicissitudes of that dreadful time, which would take a volume for their recital in each individual instance.

Paul de Sénanges was a handsome young fellow, frank, high-spirited, and of a brisk and happy temperament; which, however, modified by the many misfortunes he had undergone, was not permanently changed. He had plenty of capacity for enjoyment in him still; and as his position was very isolated, and his mind had become enlightened on social and political matters to an extent in which the men of his family would have discovered utter degradation and the women diabolical possession, he would not have been very unhappy if, under the new condition of things, he could have lived in his native country and gained an honest livelihood. But he could not do that, he was too thoroughly "suspect;" the antecedents of his family were too powerful against him: his only chance would have been to have gone into the popular camp as an extreme, violent partisan, to have out-Heroded the revolutionary Herods; and that Paul de Sénanges was too honest to do. So he was reduced to being thankful that he had escaped with his life, and to watching for an opportunity of leaving France and gaining some country where the reign of liberty, fraternity, and equality was not quite so oppressive.

The long-looked-for opportunity at length offered itself, and Paul de Sénanges was instructed by his uncle the Marquis that he must contrive to reach Marseilles, whence he should be transported to Spain — in which country the illustrious emigrant was then residing — by a certain named date. His uncle's communication arrived safely, and the plan proposed seemed a secure and eligible one. Only in two respects was it calculated to make Paul de Sénanges thoughtful. The first was, that his uncle should take any interest in the matter of his safety; the second, what could be the nature of a certain deposit which the Marquis's letter

directed him to procure, if possible, from the Château de Sénanges. The fact of this injunction explained, in some measure, the first of the two difficulties. It was plain that whatever were the contents of this packet which he was to seek for, according to the indications marked on a ground-plan drawn by his uncle and enclosed in the letter, the Marquis wanted them, and could not procure them except by the agency of his nephew. That the Marquis should venture to direct Paul de Sénanges to put himself in communication with Prosper Alix, would have been surprising to any one acquainted only with the external and generally understood features of the character of the new proprietor of the Château de Sénanges. But a few people knew Prosper Alix thoroughly, and the Marquis was one of the number; he was keen enough to know in theory that, in the case of a man with only one weakness, that is likely to be a very weak weakness indeed, and to apply the theory to the *avocat*. The beautiful, pious, and aristocratic mother of Paul de Sénanges — a lady to whose superiority the Marquis had rendered the distinguished testimony of his dislike, not hesitating to avow that she was “much too good for *his* taste” — had been very fond of, and very kind to, the motherless daughter of Prosper Alix, and he held her memory in reverence which he accorded to nothing beside, human or divine, and taught his daughter the matchless worth of the friend she had lost. The Marquis knew this, and though he had little sympathy with the sentiment, he believed he might use it in the present instance to his own profit, with safety. The event proved that he was right. Private negotiations, with the manner of whose transaction we are not concerned, passed between the *avocat* and the *ci-devant* Marquis; and the young man, then leading a life in which skulking had a large share, in the vicinity of Dijon, was instructed to present himself at the Maison Alix, under the designation of Henri Glaire, and in the character of an artist in house-decoration. The circumstances of his life in childhood and boyhood had led to his being almost safe from recognition as a man at Lyons; and, indeed, all the people on the *ci-devant* visiting-list of the château had been pretty nearly killed off, in the noble and patriotic ardor of the revolutionary times.

The ancient Château de Sénanges was proudly placed near the summit of the “Holy Hill,” and had suffered terrible depredations when the church at Fourvières was sacked, and the shrine desecrated with that ingenious impiety which is characteristic of the French; but it still retained somewhat of its former heavy grandeur. The château was much too large for the needs, tastes, or ambition of its present owner, who was too wise, if even he had been of an ostentatious disposition, not to have sedulously resisted its promptings. The jealousy of the nation of brothers was easily excited, and departure from simplicity and frugality was apt to be commented upon by domiciliary visits, and the eager imposition of fanciful fines. That portion of the vast building occupied by Prosper Alix and the *citoyenne* Berthe, his daughter, presented an appearance of well-to-do comfort and modest ease, which contrasted with the grandiose proportions and the elaborate decorations of the wide corridors, huge flat staircases, and lofty panelled apartments. The *avocat* and his daughter lived quietly in the old place, hoping, after a general fashion, for better times, but not finding the present very bad; the father becoming day by day more pleasant with his bargain, the daughter growing fonder of the great house, and the noble *bocages*, of the scrappy little vineyards, struggling for existence on the sunny hillside, and the place where the famous shrine had been. They had done it much damage; they had parted its riches among them; the once ever-open doors were shut, and the worn flags were untrodden; but nothing could degrade it, nothing could destroy what had been, in the mind of Berthe Alix, who was as devout as her father was unconcernedly unbelieving. Berthe was wonderfully well educated for a Frenchwoman of that period, and surprisingly handsome for a Frenchwoman of any. Not too tall to offend the taste of her compatriots, and not too short to be dignified and graceful, she had a symmetrical figure, and a small, well-poised head, whose profuse, shining, silken dark-brown hair she wore as nature intended, in a shower of curls, never touched by the hand of the coiffeur, — curls which clustered over her brow, and fell far down on her shapely neck. Her features were fine; the eyes very dark, and the mouth very red; the complexion clear and rather pale, and the style of the face and its expression lofty. When Berthe Alix was a child, people were accustomed to say she was pretty and refined enough to belong to the aristocracy; nobody would have dared to say so now, prettiness and refinement, together with all the other virtues admitted to a place on the patriotic roll, having become national property.

Berthe loved her father dearly. She was deeply impressed with the sense of her supreme importance to him, and fully comprehended that he would be influenced by and through her when all other persuasion or argument would be unavailing. When Prosper Alix wished and intended to do anything rather mean or selfish, he did it without letting Berthe know; and when he wished to leave undone something which he knew his daughter would decide ought to be done, he carefully concealed from her the existence of the dilemma. Nevertheless, this system did not prevent the father and daughter being very good and even confidential friends. Prosper Alix loved his daughter immeasurably, and respected her more than he respected any one in the world. With regard to her persevering religiousness, when such things were not only out of fashion and date, but illegal as well, he was very tolerant. Of course it was weak, and an absurdity; but every woman, even his beautiful, incomparable Berthe, was weak and absurd on some point or other; and, after all, he had come to the conclusion that the safest weakness with which a woman can be afflicted is that romantic and ridiculous *faiblesse* called piety. So these two lived a happy life together, Berthe's share of it being very secluded, and were wonderfully little troubled by the turbulence with which society was making its tumultuous way to the virtuous serenity of republican perfection.

The communication announcing the project of the *ci-devant* Marquis for the secure exportation of his nephew, and containing the skilful appeal before mentioned, grievously disturbed the tranquillity of Prosper, and was precisely one of those incidents which he would especially have liked to conceal from his daughter. But he could not do so; the appeal was too cleverly made; and utter indifference to it, utter neglect of the letter, which naturally suggested itself as the easiest means of getting rid of a difficulty, would have involved an act of direct and uncompromising dishonesty to which Prosper, though of sufficiently elastic conscience within the limit of professional gains, could not contemplate. The Château de Sénanges was indeed his own lawful property; his without prejudice to the former owners, dispossessed by no act of his. But the *ci-devant* Marquis — confiding in him to an extent which was quite astonishing, except on the *pis-aller* theory, which is so unflattering as to be seldom accepted — announced to him the existence of a certain packet, hidden in the château, acknowledging its value, and urging the need of its safe transmission. This was not his property. He heartily wished he had never learned its existence, but wishing that was clearly of no use; then he wished the nephew of the *ci-devant* might come soon, and take himself and the hidden wealth away with all possible speed. This latter was a more realizable desire, and Prosper settled his mind with it, communicated the interesting but decidedly dangerous secret to Berthe, received her warm sanction, and transmitted to the Marquis, by the appointed means, an assurance that his

wishes should be punctually carried out. The absence of an interdiction of his visit before a certain date was to be the signal to M. Paul de S nanges that he was to proceed to act upon his uncle's instructions; he waited the proper time, the reassuring silence was maintained unbroken, and he ultimately set forth on his journey, and accomplished it in safety.

Preparations had been made at the Maison Alix for the reception of M. Glaire, and his supposed occupation had been announced. The apartments were decorated in a heavy, gloomy style, and those of the *citoyenne* in particular (they had been occupied by a lady who had once been designated as *feue Madame la Marquise*, but who was referred to now as *la m re du ci-devant*) were much in need of renovation. The alcove, for instance, was all that was least gay and most far from simple. The *citoyenne* would have all that changed. On the morning of the day of the expected arrival, Berthe said to her father:

"It would seem as if the Marquis did not know the exact spot in which the packet is deposited. M. Paul's assumed character implies the necessity for a search."

M. Henri Glaire arrived at the Maison Alix, was fraternally received, and made acquainted with the sphere of his operations. The young man had a good deal of both ability and taste in the line he had assumed, and the part was not difficult to play. Some days were judiciously allowed to pass before the real object of the masquerade was pursued, and during that time cordial relations established themselves between the *avocat* and his guest. The young man was handsome, elegant, engaging, with all the external advantages, and devoid of the vices, errors, and hopeless infatuated unscrupulousness, of his class; he had naturally quick intelligence, and some real knowledge and comprehension of life had been knocked into him by the hard-hitting blows of Fate. His face was like his mother's, Prosper Alix thought, and his mind and tastes were of the very pattern which, in theory, Berthe approved. Berthe, a very unconventional French girl — who thought the new era of purity, love, virtue, and disinterestedness ought to do away with marriage by barter as one of its most notable reforms, and had been disenchanted by discovering that the abolition of marriage altogether suited the taste of the incorruptible Republic better — might like, might even love, this young man. She saw so few men, and had no fancy for patriots; she would certainly be obstinate about it if she did chance to love him. This would be a nice state of affairs. This would be a pleasant consequence of the confiding request of the *ci-devant*. Prosper wished with all his heart for the arrival of the concerted signal, which should tell Henri Glaire that he might fulfil the purpose of his sojourn at the Maison Alix, and set forth for Marseilles.

But the signal did not come, and the days — long, beautiful, sunny, soothing summer-days — went on. The painting of the panels of the *citoyenne's* apartment, which she vacated for that purpose, progressed slowly; and M. Paul de S nanges, guided by the ground-plan, and aided by Berthe, had discovered the spot in which the jewels of price, almost the last remnants of the princely wealth of the S nanges, had been hidden by the *femme-de-chambre* who had perished with her mistress, having confided a general statement of the fact to a priest, for transmission to the Marquis. This spot had been ingeniously chosen. The sleeping-apartment of the late Marquis was extensive, lofty, and provided with an alcove of sufficiently large dimensions to have formed in itself a handsome room. This space, containing a splendid but gloomy bed, on an estrade, and hung with rich faded brocade, was divided from the general extent of the apartment by a low railing of black oak, elaborately carved, opening in the centre, and with a flat wide bar along the top, covered with crimson velvet. The curtains were contrived to hang from the ceiling, and, when let down inside the screen of railing, they matched the draperies which closed before the great stone balcony at the opposite end of the room. Since the *avocat's* daughter had occupied this palatial chamber, the curtains of the alcove had never been drawn, and she had substituted for them a high folding screen of black-and-gold Japanese pattern, also a relic of the grand old times, which stood about six feet on the outside of the rails that shut in her bed. The floor was of shining oak, testifying to the conscientious and successful labors of successive generations of *frotteurs*; and on the spot where the railing of the alcove opened by a pretty quaint device sundering the intertwined arms of a pair of very chubby cherubs, a square space in the floor was also richly carved.

The seekers soon reached the end of their search. A little effort removed the square of carved oak, and underneath they found a casket, evidently of old workmanship, richly wrought in silver, much tarnished but quite intact. It was agreed that this precious deposit should be replaced, and the carved square laid down over it, until the signal for his departure should reach Paul. The little baggage which under any circumstances he could have ventured to allow himself in the dangerous journey he was to undertake, must be reduced, so as to admit of his carrying the casket without exciting suspicion.

The finding of the hidden treasure was not the first joint discovery made by the daughter of the *avocat* and the son of the *ci-devant*. The cogitations of Prosper Alix were very wise, very reasonable; but they were a little tardy. Before he had admitted the possibility of mischief, the mischief was done. Each had found out that the love of the other was indispensable to the happiness of life; and they had exchanged confidences, assurances, protestations, and promises, as freely, as fervently, and as hopefully, as if no such thing as a Republic, one and indivisible, with a keen scent and an unappeasable thirst for the blood of aristocrats, existed. They forgot all about "Liberty, Fraternity, and Equality" — these egotistical, narrow-minded young people; — they also forgot the characteristic alternative to those unparalleled blessings — "Death." But Prosper Alix did not forget any of these things; and his consternation, his provision of suffering for his beloved daughter, were terrible, when she told him, with a simple noble frankness which the *grandes dames* of the dead-and-gone time of great ladies had rarely had a chance of exhibiting, that she loved M. Paul de S nanges, and intended to marry him when the better times should come. Perhaps she meant when that alternative of *death* should be struck off the sacred formula; — of course she meant to marry him with the sanction of her father, which she made no doubt she should receive.

Prosper Alix was in pitiable perplexity. He could not bear to terrify his daughter by a full explanation of the danger she was incurring; he could not bear to delude her with false hope. If this young man could be got away at once safely, there was not much likelihood that he would ever be able to return to France. Would Berthe pine for him, or would she forget him, and make a rational, sensible, rich, republican marriage, which would not imperil either her reputation for pure patriotism or her father's? The latter would be the very best thing that could possibly happen, and therefore it was decidedly unwise to calculate upon it; but, after all, it was possible; and Prosper had not the courage, in such a strait, to resist the hopeful promptings of a possibility. How ardently he regretted that he had complied with the prayer of the *ci-devant*! When would the signal for Mr. Paul's departure come?

Prosper Alix had made many sacrifices, had exercised much self-control for his daughter's sake; but he had never sustained a more severe trial than this, never suffered more than he did now, under the strong necessity for hiding from her his absolute conviction of the impossibility of a happy result for this attachment, in that future to which the lovers looked so fearlessly. He could not even make his anxiety and apprehension known to Paul de Sénanges; for he did not believe the young man had sufficient strength of will to conceal anything so important from the keen and determined observation of Berthe.

The expected signal was not given, and the lovers were incautious. The seclusion of the Maison Alix had all the danger, as well as all the delight, of solitude, and Paul dropped his disguise too much and too often. The servants, few in number, were of the truest patriotic principles, and to some of them the denunciation of the *citoyen*, whom they condescended to serve because the sacred Revolution had not yet made them as rich as he, would have been a delightful duty, a sweet-smelling sacrifice to be laid on the altar of the country. They heard certain names and places mentioned; they perceived many things which led them to believe that Henri Glaire was not an industrial artist and pure patriot, worthy of respect, but a wretched *ci-devant*, resorting to the dignity of labor to make up for the righteous destruction of every other kind of dignity. One day a gardener, of less stoical virtue than his fellows, gave Prosper Alix a warning that the presence of a *ci-devant* upon his premises was suspected, and that he might be certain a domiciliary visit, attended with dangerous results to himself, would soon take place. Of course the *avocat* did not commit himself by any avowal to this lukewarm patriot; but he casually mentioned that Henri Glaire was about to take his leave. What was to be done? He must not leave the neighborhood without receiving the instructions he was awaiting; but he must leave the house, and be supposed to have gone quite away. Without any delay or hesitation, Prosper explained the facts to Berthe and her lover, and insisted on the necessity for an instant parting. Then the courage and the readiness of the girl told. There was no crying, and very little trembling; she was strong and helpful.

"He must go to Pichon's, father," she said, "and remain there until the signal is given. — Pichon is a master-mason, Paul," she continued, turning to her lover, "and his wife was my nurse. They are avaricious people; but they are fond of me in their way, and they will shelter you faithfully enough, when they know that my father will pay them handsomely. You must go at once, unseen by the servants; they are at supper. Fetch your valise, and bring it to my room. We will put the casket in it, and such of your things as you must take out to make room for it, we can hide under the plank. My father will go with you to Pichon's, and we will communicate with you there as soon as it is safe."

Paul followed her to the large gloomy room where the treasure lay, and they took the casket from its hiding-place. It was heavy, though not large, and an awkward thing to pack away among linen in a small valise. They managed it, however, and, the brief preparation completed, the moment of parting arrived. Firmly and eloquently, though in haste, Berthe assured Paul of her changeless love and faith, and promised him to wait for him for any length of time in France, if better days should be slow of coming, or to join him in some foreign land, if they were never to come. Her father was present, full of compassion and misgiving. At length he said:

"Come, Paul, you must leave her; every moment is of importance."

The young man and his betrothed were standing on the spot whence they had taken the casket; the carved rail with the heavy curtains might have been the outer sanctuary of an altar, and they bride and bridegroom before it, with earnest, loving faces, and clasped hands.

"Farewell, Paul," said Berthe; "promise me once more, in this the moment of our parting, that you will come to me again, if you are alive, when the danger is past."

"Whether I am living or dead, Berthe," said Paul de Sénanges, strongly moved by some sudden inexplicable instinct, "I will come to you again."

In a few more minutes, Prosper Alix and his guest, who carried, not without difficulty, the small but heavy leather valise, had disappeared in the distance, and Berthe was on her knees before the *prie-dieu* of the *ci-devant* Marquise, her face turned toward the "Holy Hill" of Fourvières.

Pichon, *maître*, and his sons, *garçons-maçons*, were well-to-do people, rather morose, exceedingly avaricious, and of taciturn dispositions; but they were not ill spoken of by their neighbors. They had amassed a good deal of money in their time, and were just then engaged on a very lucrative job. This was the construction of several of the steep descents, by means of stairs, straight and winding, cut in the face of the *côteaux*, by which pedestrians are enabled to descend into the town. Pichon *père* was a *propriétaire* as well; his property was that which is now in the possession of Giraudier, *pharmacien*, *première classe*, and which was destined to attain a sinister celebrity during his proprietorship. One of the straightest and steepest of the stairways had been cut close to the *terre* which the mason owned, and a massive wall, destined to bound the highroad at the foot of the declivity, was in course of construction.

When Prosper Alix and Paul de Sénanges reached the abode of Pichon, the master-mason, with his sons and workmen, had just completed their day's work, and were preparing to eat the supper served by the wife and mother, a tall, gaunt woman, who looked as if a more liberal scale of housekeeping would have done her good, but on whose features the stamp of that devouring and degrading avarice which is the commonest vice of the French peasantry, was set as plainly as on the hard faces of her husband and her sons. The *avocat* explained his business and introduced his companion briefly, and awaited the reply of Pichon *père* without any appearance of inquietude.

"You don't run any risk," he said; "at least, you don't run any risk which I cannot make it worth your while to incur. It is not the first time you have received a temporary guest on my recommendation. You know nothing about the citizen Glaire, except that he is recommended to you by me. I am responsible; you can, on occasion, make me so. The citizen may remain with you a short time; can hardly remain long. Say, citizen, is it agreed? I have no time to spare."

It was agreed, and Prosper Alix departed, leaving M. Paul de Sénanges, convinced that the right, indeed the only, thing had been done, and yet much troubled and depressed.

Pichon *père* was a short, squat, powerfully built man, verging on sixty, whose thick, dark grizzled hair, sturdy limbs, and hard hands, on which the muscles showed like cords, spoke of endurance and strength; he was, indeed, noted in the neighborhood for those qualities. His sons resembled him slightly, and each other closely, as was natural, for they were twins. They were heavy, lumpish fellows, and they made but an ungracious return to the attempted civilities of the stranger, to whom the

offer of their mother to show him his room was a decided relief. As he rose to follow the woman, Paul de Sénanges lifted his small valise with difficulty from the floor, on which he had placed it on entering the house, and carried it out of the room in both his arms. The brothers followed these movements with curiosity, and, when the door closed behind their mother and the stranger, their eyes met.

Twenty-four hours had passed away, and nothing new had occurred at the Maison Alix. The servants had not expressed any curiosity respecting the departure of the citizen Glaire, no domiciliary visit had taken place, and Berthe and her father were discussing the propriety of Prosper's venturing, on the pretext of an excursion in another direction, a visit to the isolated and quiet dwelling of the master-mason. No signal had yet arrived. It was agreed that after the lapse of another day, if their tranquillity remained undisturbed, Prosper Alix should visit Paul de Sénanges. Berthe, who was silent and preoccupied, retired to her own room early, and her father, who was uneasy and apprehensive, desperately anxious for the promised communication from the Marquis, was relieved by her absence.

The moon was high in the dark sky, and her beams were flung across the polished oak floor of Berthe's bedroom, through the great window with the stone balcony, when the girl, who had gone to sleep with her lover's name upon her lips in prayer, awoke with a sudden start, and sat up in her bed. An unbearable dread was upon her; and yet she was unable to utter a cry, she was unable to make another movement. Had she heard a voice? No, no one had spoken, nor did she fancy that she heard any sound. But within her, somewhere inside her heaving bosom, something said, "Berthe!"

And she listened, and knew what it was. And it spoke, and said:

"I promised you that, living or dead, I would come to you again. And I have come to you; but not living."

She was quite awake. Even in the agony of her fear she looked around, and tried to move her hands, to feel her dress and the bedclothes, and to fix her eyes on some familiar object, that she might satisfy herself, before this racing and beating, this whirling and yet icy chilliness of her blood should kill her outright, that she was really awake.

"I have come to you; but not living."

What an awful thing that voice speaking within her was! She tried to raise her head and to look toward the place where the moonbeams marked bright lines upon the polished floor, which lost themselves at the foot of the Japanese screen. She forced herself to this effort, and lifted her eyes, wild and haggard with fear, and there, the moonbeams at his feet, the tall black screen behind him, she saw Paul de Sénanges. She saw him; she looked at him quite steadily; she rose, slowly, with a mechanical movement, and stood upright beside her bed, clasping her forehead with her hands, and gazing at him. He stood motionless, in the dress he had worn when he took leave of her, the light-colored riding-coat of the period, with a short cape, and a large white cravat tucked into the double breast. The white muslin was flecked, and the front of the riding-coat was deeply stained, with blood. He looked at her, and she took a step forward — another — then, with a desperate effort, she dashed open the railing and flung herself on her knees before him, with her arms stretched out as if to clasp him. But he was no longer there; the moonbeams fell clear and cold upon the polished floor, and lost themselves where Berthe lay, at the foot of the screen, her head upon the ground, and every sign of life gone from her.

"Where is the citizen Glaire?" asked Prosper Alix of the *citoyenne* Pichon, entering the house of the master-mason abruptly, and with a stern and threatening countenance. "I have a message for him; I must see him."

"I know nothing about him," replied the *citoyenne*, without turning in his direction, or relaxing her culinary labors. "He went away from here the next morning, and I did not trouble myself to ask where; that is his affair."

"He went away? Without letting me know! Be careful, *citoyenne*; this is a serious matter."

"So they tell me," said the woman with a grin, which was not altogether free from pain and fear; "for you! A serious thing to have a *suspect* in your house, and palm him off on honest people. However, he went away peaceably enough when he knew we had found him out, and that we had no desire to go to prison, or worse, on his account, or yours."

She was strangely insolent, this woman, and the listener felt his helplessness; he had brought the young man there with such secrecy, he had so carefully provided for the success of concealment.

"Who carried his valise?" Prosper Alix asked her suddenly.

"How should I know?" she replied; but her hands lost their steadiness, and she upset a stew-pan; "he carried it here, didn't he? and I suppose he carried it away again."

Prosper Alix looked at her steadily — she shunned his gaze, but she showed no other sign of confusion; then horror and disgust of the woman came over him.

"I must see Pichon," he said; "where is he?"

"Where should he be but at the wall? he and the boys are working there, as always. The citizen can see them; but he will remember not to detain them; in a little quarter of an hour the soup will be ready."

The citizen did see the master-mason and his sons, and after an interview of some duration he left the place in a state of violent agitation and complete discomfiture. The master-mason had addressed to him these words at parting:

"I assert that the man went away at his own free will; but if you do not keep very quiet, I shall deny that he came here at all — you cannot prove he did — and I will denounce you for harboring a *suspect* and *ci-devant* under a false name. I know a De Sénanges when I see him as well as you, citizen Alix; and, wishing M. Paul a good journey, I hope you will consider about this matter, for truly, my friend, I think you will sneeze in the sack before I shall."

"We must bear it, Berthe, my child," said Prosper Alix to his daughter many weeks later, when the fever had left her, and she was able to talk with her father of the mysterious and frightful events which had occurred. "We are utterly helpless. There is no proof, only the word of these wretches against mine, and certain destruction to me if I speak. We will go to Spain, and tell the Marquis all the truth, and never return, if you would rather not. But, for the rest, we must bear it."

"Yes, my father," said Berthe submissively, "I know we must; but God need not, and I don't believe He will."

The father and the daughter left France unmolested, and Berthe “bore it” as well as she could. When better times come they returned, Prosper Alix an old man, and Berthe a stern, silent, handsome woman, with whom no one associated any notions of love or marriage. But long before their return the traditions of the Croix Rousse were enriched by circumstances which led to that before-mentioned capital bargain made by the father of the Giraudier of the present. These circumstances were the violent death of Pichon and his two sons, who were killed by the fall of a portion of the great boundary-wall on the very day of its completion, and the discovery, close to its foundation, at the extremity of Pichon’s *terre*, of the corpse of a young man attired in a light-colored riding-coat, who had been stabbed through the heart.

Berthe Alix lived alone in the Château de Sénanges, under its restored name, until she was a very old woman. She lived long enough to see the golden figure on the summit of the “Holy Hill,” long enough to forget the bad old times, but not long enough to forget or cease to mourn the lover who had kept his promise, and come back to her; the lover who rested in the earth which once covered the bones of the martyrs, and who kept a place for her by his side. She has filled that place for many years. You may see it, when you look down from the second gallery of the bell-tower at Fourvières, following the bend of the outstretched golden arm of Notre Dame.

The château was pulled down some years ago, and there is no trace of its former existence among the vines.

Good times, and bad times, and again good times have come for the Croix Rousse, for Lyons, and for France, since then; but the remembrance of the treachery of Pichon & Sons, and of the retribution which at once exposed and punished their crime, outlives all changes. And once, every year, on a certain summer night, three ghostly figures are seen, by any who have courage and patience to watch for them, gliding along by the foot of the boundary-wall, two of them carrying a dangling corpse, and the other, implements for mason’s work and a small leather valise. Giraudier, *pharmacien*, has never seen these ghostly figures, but he describes them with much minuteness; and only the *esprits forts* of the Croix Rousse deny that the ghosts of Pichon & Sons are not yet laid.

THE PHANTOM 4TH.

THEY were three.

It was in the cheap night-service train from Paris to Calais that I first met them.

Railways, as a rule, are among the many things which they do *not* order better in France, and the French Northern line is one of the worst managed in the world, barring none, not even the Italian *vie ferrate*. I make it a rule, therefore, to punish the directors of, and the shareholders in, that undertaking to the utmost within my limited ability, by spending as little money on their line as I can help.

It was, then, in a third-class compartment of the train that I met the three.

Three as hearty, jolly-looking Saxon faces, with stalwart frames to match, as one would be likely to meet in an hour's walk from the Regent's Park to the Mansion House.

One of the three was dark, the other two were fair. The dark one was the senior of the party. He wore an incipient full beard, evidently in process of training, with a considerable amount of grizzle in it.

The face of one of his companions was graced with a magnificent flowing beard. The third of the party, a fair-haired youth of some twenty-three or four summers, showed a scrupulously smooth-shaven face.

They looked all three much flushed and slightly excited, and, I must say, they turned out the most boisterous set of fellows I ever met.

They were clearly gentlemen, however, and men of education, with considerable linguistic acquirements; for they chatted and sang, and declaimed and "did orations" all the way from Paris to Calais, in a slightly bewildering variety of tongues.

Their jollity had, perhaps, just a little over-tinge of the slap-bang jolly-dog style in it; but there was so much heartiness and goodnature in all they said and in all they did, that it was quite impossible for any of the other occupants of the carriage to vote them a nuisance; and even the sourest of the officials, whom they chaffed most unmercifully and unremittingly at every station on the line, took their punishment with a shrug and a grin. The only person, indeed, who rose against them in indignant protestation was the head-waiter at the Calais station refreshment-room, to whom they would persist in propounding puzzling problems, such as, for instance, "If you charge two shillings for one-and-a-half-ounce slice of breast of veal, how many fools will it take to buy the joint off you?" — and what *he* got by the attempt to stop their chaff was a caution to any other sinner who might have felt similarly inclined.

As for me, I could only give half my sense of hearing to their utterings, the other half being put under strict sequester at the time by my friend O'Kweene, the great Irish philosopher, who was delivering to me, for my own special behoof and benefit, a brilliant, albeit somewhat abstruse, dissertation on the "visible and palpable outward manifestations of the inner consciousness of the soul in a trance;" which occupied all the time from Paris to Calais, full eight hours, and which, to judge from my feelings at the time, would certainly afford matter for three heavy volumes of reading in bed, in cases of inveterate sleeplessness — a hint to enterprising publishers.

My friend O'Kweene, who intended to stay a few days at Calais, took leave of me on the pier, and I went on board the steamer that was to carry us and the mail over to Dover.

Here I found our trio of the railway-car, snugly ensconced under an extemporized awning, artfully constructed with railway-rugs and greatcoats, supported partly against the luggage, and partly upon several oars, purloined from the boats, and turned into tent-poles for the nonce — which made the skipper swear wofully when he found it out some time after.

The three were even more cheery and boisterous on board than they had been on shore. From what I could make out in the dark, they were discussing the contents of divers bottles of liquor; I counted four dead men dropped quietly overboard by them in the course of the hour and a half we had to wait for the arrival of the mailtrain, which was late, as usual on this line.

At last we were off, about halfpast two o'clock in the morning. It was a beautiful, clear, moonlit night, so clear, indeed, that we could see the Dover lights almost from Calais harbor. But we had considerably more than a capful of wind, and there was a turgent ground-swell on, which made our boat — double-engined, and as trim and tidy a craft as ever sped across the span from shore to shore — behave rather lively, with sportive indulgence in a brisk game of pitch-and-toss that proved anything but comfortable to most of the passengers.

When we were steaming out of Calais harbor, our three friends, emerging from beneath their tent, struck up in chorus Campbell's noble song, "Ye Mariners of England," finishing up with a stave from "Rule, Britannia!"

But, alas for them! however loudly their throats were shouting forth the sway proverbially held by Albion and her sons over the waves, on this occasion at least the said waves seemed determined upon ruling these particular three Britons with a rod of antimony; for barely a few seconds after the last vibrating echoes of the "Britons never, never, never shall be slaves!" had died away upon the wind, I beheld the three leaning lovingly together, in fast friendship linked, over the rail, conversing in deep ventriguttural accents with the denizens of Neptune's watery realm.

We had one of the quickest passages on record — ninety-three minutes' steaming carried us across from shore to shore. When we were just on the point of landing, I heard the dark senior of the party mutter to his companions, in a hollow whisper and mysterious manner, "He is gone again;" to which the others, the bearded and the smooth-shaven, responded in the same way, with deep sighs of evident relief, "Ay, marry! so he is at last."

This mysterious communication roused my curiosity. Who was the party that was said to be gone at last? Where had he come from? where had he been hiding, that *I* had not seen him? and where was he gone to now? I determined to know; if but the opportunity would offer, to screw, by cunning questioning, the secret out of either of the three.

Fate favored my design.

For some inscrutable reason, known only to the company's officials, we cheap-trainers were not permitted to proceed on our journey to London along with the mail, but were left to kick our heels for some two hours at the Dover station.

I went into the refreshment-room to look for my party; I had a notion I should find them where the Briton's unswerving and unerring instinct would be most likely to lead them. It turned out that I was right in my conjecture. There they were, seated round a table with huge bowls of steaming tea and monster piles of buttered toast and muffins spread on the festive board before them. Ay, indeed, there they were; but *quantum mutati ab illis*! how strangely changed from the noisy, rollicking set I had known them in the railway-car and on board the steamer, ere yet the demon of sea-sickness had claimed them for his own! How ghastly sober they looked now, to be sure! And how sternly and silently bent upon devoting themselves to the swilling of the Chinese shrub infusion and to the gorging of indigestible muffins. It was quite clear to me that it would have been worse than folly to venture upon addressing them while thus absorbed in absorbing. So I resolved to await a more favorable opening, and went out meanwhile to walk on the platform.

A short time I was left in solitary possession of the promenade; then I became suddenly aware that another traveller was treading the same ground with me — it was the dark elderly leader of the three. I glanced at him as he passed me under one of the lamps. He looked pale and sad. The furrowed lines on his brow bespoke deliberation deep and pondering profound. All the infinite mirth of the preceding few hours had departed from him, leaving him but a wretched wreck of his former reckless self.

"A fine night, sir," I said to break the ice—"for the season of the year," I added by way of a saving clause, to tone down the absoluteness of the assertion.

He looked at me abstractedly, merely reëchoing my own words, "A fine night, sir, for the season of the year."

"Why look ye so sad now, who were erst so jolly?" I bluntly asked, determined to force him into conversation.

"Ay, indeed, why so sad now?" he replied, looking me full in the face; then, suddenly claspng my arm with a spasmodic grip, he continued hurriedly, "I think I had best confide our secret to you. You seem a man of thought. I witnessed and admired the patient attention with which you listened to your friend's abstruse talk in the railway-car. Maybe you can find the solution of a mystery which defies the ponderings of our poor brains — mine and my two friends."

Then he proceeded to pour into my attentive ear this gruesome tale of mystery:

"We three — that is, myself, yon tall bearded Briton," pointing to the glass door of the refreshment-room, "whose name is Jack Hobson, and young Emmanuel Topp, junior partner in a great beer firm, whom you may behold now at his fifth bowl of tea and his seventh muffin — are teetotallers — —"

"Teetotallers!" I could not help exclaiming. "Lord bless me! that is certainly about the last thing I should have taken you for, either of you."

"Well," he replied with some slight confusion, "at least, we *were* total teetotallers, though I admit we can now only claim the character of partial abstainers. The fact is, when, about a fortnight ago, we were discussing the plan of our projected visit to the great Paris Exhibition, Topp suggested that while in France we should do as the French do, to which Jack Hobson assented, remarking that the French knew nothing about tea, and that a Frenchman's tea would be sure to prove an Englishman's poison. So we resolved to suspend the pledge during our visit to France.

"It was on the second day after our arrival in Paris. We were dining in a private cabinet at Désiré Beaurain's, one of the leading restaurants on the fashionable side of the Montmartre — Italiens Boulevard. Our dinner was what an Irishman might call a most 'illigant' affair. We had sipped several bottles of Sauterne, and tasted a few of Tavel, and we were just topping the entertainment with a solitary bottle of champagne, when I became suddenly aware of the presence of another party in the room — a *fourth man* — who sat him down at our table, and helped himself liberally to our liquor. From what I ascertained afterward from Jack Hobson and Emmanuel Topp, the intruder's presence became revealed to them also, either about the same time or a little later. What was he like? I cannot tell. His figure and face remained indistinct throughout — phantom-like. His features seemed endowed with a strong weird mobility that would defyingly elude the fixing grasp of our eager eyes. Now, and to my two companions, he would look marvellously like me; then, to me, he would stalk and rave about in the likeness of Jack Hobson; again, he would seem the counterfeit of Emmanuel Topp; then he would look like all the three of us put together; then like neither of us, nor like anybody else. Oh, sir, it was a woful thing to be haunted by this phantom apparition. Yet the strangest part of the affair was that neither of us seemed to feel a whit surprised at the dread presence; that we quietly and uncomplainingly let him drink our wine, and actually give orders for more; that we never objected, in fact, to any of his sayings and doings. What seemed also strange was that the waiter, while yet receiving and executing his orders, was evidently pretending to ignore his presence. But then, as I dare say you know as well as I do, French waiters are *such* actors!

"Well, to resume, there he was, this fourth man, seated at our table and feasting at our expense. And the pranks that he would play us — they were truly stupendous. He began his little game by ordering in half-a-dozen of champagne. And when the waiter seemed slightly doubtful and hesitating about executing the order, Topp, forsooth, must put in his oar, and indorse the command, actually pretending that *I*, who am now speaking to you, and who am the very last man in the world likely to dream of such a preposterous thing, had given the order, and that I was a jolly old brick, and the best of boon companions. Surprise at this barefaced assertion kept me mute, and so, of course, the champagne was brought in, and I thought the best thing to do under the circumstances was to have my share of it at least; and so I had — my fair share; but, bless you, it was nothing to what that fourth man drank of it. In fact, the amount of liquor *he* would swill on this and on the many subsequent occasions he intruded his presence upon us, was a caution.

"We paid our little bill without grumbling, though the presence of the fourth man at our table had added rather heavily to the *addition*, as they call bills at French restaurants.

"We sallied forth into the street to get a whiff of fresh air. *He*, the demon, pertinaciously stuck to us; he familiarly linked his arm through mine, and, suggesting coffee as rather a good thing to take after dinner, took us over to the Café du Cardinal, where he, however, took none of the Arabian beverage himself (there being only three cups placed for us, as I distinctly saw), but drank an interminable succession of *chasse-café*, utterly regardless of the divisional lines of the cognac *carafon*. Part of these he would take neat, another portion he would burn over sugar, gloating glaringly over the bluish flame, while gleams of demoniac delight would flit across his ever-changing features. Jack Hobson and Topp, I am sorry to say, joined him with a will in this double-distilled debauch; and when I attempted to remonstrate with them, they brazenly asserted that *I*, who am now speaking to you, who have always, publicly and privately, declared brandy to be the worst of evil spirits, had taken more of it, to my own cheek,

as they slangily expressed it, than the two of them together; and the waiter, who had evidently been bribed by them, boldly maintained that *le vieux monsieur*, as he had the impudence to call me, had swallowed *plus de trois carafons de fine*; whereupon the fourth man, stepping up to him, punched his head, which served him right. Now you will hardly believe me when I tell you that at that very instant Topp forced me back into my chair, while Jack Hobson pinioned my arms from behind, and the waiter had the unblushing effrontery to stamp and rave at me like a maniac, demanding satisfaction or compensation at my hands for the unprovoked assault committed upon him by *me, coram populo!* — by *me*, who, I beg to assure you, am the most peaceable man living, and am actually famed for the mildness of my disposition and the sweetness and suavity of my temper. And, would you believe it? everybody present, waiters and guests, and my own two bosom-friends, joined in the conspiracy against me, and I actually had to give the wretch of a waiter ten francs as a plaster for his broken pate, and a salve for his wounded honor! Where was the real culprit all this time, you ask me — the fourth man? Why, he quietly stood by grinning, and they all and every one of them pretended not to see him, though Topp and Jack Hobson next morning confessed to me that they certainly had an indistinct consciousness of the presence throughout of this miserable intruder.

“How we finished that night I remember not; nor could Jack Hobson or Emmanuel Topp. All we could conscientiously stand by, if we were questioned, is that we awoke next morning — the three of us — with some slight swimming in our heads, and a hazy recollection of a gorgeous dream of brilliant lights and sounds of music and revelry, and bright visions of groves and grottoes, and dancing houris (or hussies, as moral Jack Hobson calls the poor things), and a hot supper at a certain place in the Passage des Princes, of which I think the name is Peter’s.

“I will not tire your courteous patience by a detailed narrative of our experiences day after day, during our fortnight’s stay in Paris. Suffice it to tell you that from that time forward to yesterday, when we left, the *fourth man*, as we, by mutual consent, agreed to call the phantom apparition, came in regularly to our dinner; with the dessert or a little after; that he would constantly suggest a fresh supply of Côte St. Jacques, Moulin-à-Vent, Beaune, Chambertin, Roederer Carte Blanche, and a variety of other, generally rather more than less expensive, wines — and that he somehow would manage to make us have them, too.

“Then he would sally forth with us to the café, where he would indulge in irritating chaff of the waiters, and in slighting comments upon the great French nation in general, and the Parisians in particular, and upon their institutions and manners and customs.

“He would insist upon singing the Marseillaise; he would speak disparagingly of the Emperor, whom he would irreverently call Lambert; he would pass cutting and unsavory remarks upon the glorious system of the night-carts; he would call down the judgment of Heaven upon the devoted head of poor Mr. Haussmann; he would go up to some unhappy sergent-de-ville, who might, however unwittingly, excite his ire, and tell him a bit of his mind in English, with sarcastic allusions to his cocket-hat and his toasting-fork, and polite inquiries after the health of *ce cher* Monsieur Lambert, or the whereabouts of *cet excellent* Monsieur Godinot. The worst of the matter was that I suppose for the reason that man is an imitative animal, a sort of *À! ·°¿À ¼ÄÄ¿À*, or Monboddian monkey minus the tail — my two companions were, somehow, always sure to join the wretch in his evil behavior, and to go on just as bad as he did. No wonder, then, that we got into no end of rows, and it is a marvel to me now, how ever we have managed to get off with a whole skin to our bodies.

“He would insist upon taking us to Mabilles, the Closerie des Lilas, and the Châteaurouge, where he would indulge in the maddest pranks and antics, and somehow lead us to join in the wildest dances, and make us lift our legs as high as the highest lifter among the *habitués*, male or female.

“One night, at about halfpast two in the morning (*Hibernicè*), he had the cool assurance to drag us along with him to the then closed entrance to the Passage des Princes, where he frantically shook the gate, and insisted to the frightened concierge, who came running up in his nightshirt, that Peter’s must and ought to be open still, as *we* had not had our supper yet; and Topp and Jack Hobson, forsooth, must join in the row. I have no distinct recollection of whether it was our phantom guest or either of my companions that madly strove to detain the hastily retreating form of the concierge by a desperate clutch at the tail of his shirt; I only remember that the garment gave way in the struggle, and that the unhappy functionary was reduced nearly altogether to the primitive buff costume of the father of man in Paradise ere he had put his teeth into that unlucky apple of which, the pips keep so inconveniently sticking in poor humanity’s gizzard to the present day. And what I remember also to my cost is, that the sergent-de-ville, whom the bereaved man’s shouts of distress brought to the scene, fastened upon *me*, the most inoffensive of mortals, for a compensation fine of twenty francs, as if *I* had been the culprit. And deuced glad we were, I assure you, to get off without more serious damage to our pocket and reputation than this, and a copious volley of *sacrés ivrognes Anglais*, fired at us by the wretched concierge and his friend of the police, who, I am quite sure, went halves with him in the compensation. Ah! they are a lawless set, these French.

“On another occasion we three went to the Exhibition, where we visited one of our colonial departments, in company with several English friends, and some French gentlemen appointed on the wine jury. We went to taste a few samples of colonial wines. *He* was not with us *then*. Barely, however, had we uncorked a poor dozen bottles, which turned out rather good for colonial, though a little raw and slightly uneducated, when *who* should stalk in but our fourth man, as jaunty and unconcerned as ever. Well, *he* fell to tasting, and he soon grew eloquent in praise of the colonial juice, which he declared would, in another twenty years’ time, be fit to compete successfully with the best French vintages. Of course, the French gentlemen with us could not stand *this*; they spoke slightly of the British colonial, and one of them even went so far as to call it rotgut. I cannot say whether it was the spirit of the uncompromising opinion thus pronounced, or the coarsely indelicate way in which the judgment of our French friend was expressed, that riled our phantom guest — enough, it brought him down in full force upon the offender and his countrymen, with most fluent French vituperation and an unconscionable amount of bad jokes and worse puns, finishing up with a general address to them as members of the *disgusting* jury, instead of jury of *dégustation*. Now, this I should not have minded so much; for, I must confess, I felt rather nettled at the national conceit and prejudice of these French. But the wretch, in the impetuous utterance of his invective, must somehow — though I was not aware of it at the time — have mimicked my gestures and imitated the very tones and accent of my voice so closely as to deceive even some of my English companions: or how else to account for the fact of their calling me a noisy brawler and a pestilent nuisance? *me*, the gentlest and mildest-spoken of mortals!

"Before our departure from London we had calculated our probable expenses on a most liberal scale, and we had made comfortable provision accordingly for a few weeks' stay in Paris. But with the additional heavy burden of the franking of so copious an imbibor as our fourth man thus unexpectedly thrown on our shoulders, it was no great wonder that we should find our resources go much faster than we had anticipated; so we had already been forcedly led to bethink ourselves of shortening our intended stay in the French capital when a fresh exploit of the phantom fourth, climaxing all his past misdeeds, brought matters to a crisis.

"It was the day before yesterday, the 4th of September. We had been dining at Marigny, and dancing at Mabilly. Our eccentric guest had come in, as usual, with the champagne, and had of course, after dinner, taken us over to the enchanted gardens. We were all very jolly. *He* suggested supper at the Cascades, in the Bois de Boulogne. We chartered a *fiacre* to take us there and back. We supped rather copiously. *He* somehow made our coachman drunk, and took upon himself to drive us home. Need I tell you that he upset us in the Avenue de l'Impératrice, and that we had to walk it, and pretty fast too? It was a mercy there were no bones broken.

"Well, as we were walking along, just barely recovering from the shock of the accident, he suddenly took some new whim into his confounded noddle. Nothing would do for him but he must drag us along with him to the great entrance of the Elysée Napoléon (which erst was, and maybe is soon likely to be once more, the Elysée Bourbon), where he had the brazen impudence to claim admittance, as the Emperor, he pretended, had been graciously pleased to offer us the splendid hospitality of that renowned mansion. What further happened here, neither I nor either of my friends can tell. Our recollections from this period till next morning are doubtful and indistinct. All we can state for certain is, that yesterday morning we awoke, the three of us, in a most wretched state, in a strange, nasty place. We learn soon after from a gentleman in a cocked hat, who came to visit us on business, that the imperial hospitality which we had claimed last night had indeed been extended to us — only in the *violon*, instead of the Elysée. Our phantom guest was gone: he would alway, somehow sneak away in the morning, when there was nothing left for him to drink — the guzzling villain!

"The gentleman in the cocked-hat pressingly invited us to pay a visit to the Commissaire du Quartier. That formidable functionary received us with the customary French-polished veneer of urbanity which, as a rule, constitutes the *suaviter in modo* of the higher class of Gallic officials. He read us a severe lecture, however, upon the alleged impropriety of our conduct; and when I ventured to protest that it was not to us the blame ought to be imputed, but to the *quatrième*, he mistook my meaning, and, ere I could explain myself, he cut me short with a polite remark that the French used the cardinal instead of the ordinal numbers in stating the days of the month, with the exception of the first, and that he had had too much trouble with our countrymen (he took us for Yankees!) on the 4th of July, to be disposed to look with an over-lenient eye upon the vagaries we had chosen to commit on the 4th of September, which he supposed was another great national day with us. He would, however, let us off this time with a simple reprimand, upon payment of one hundred francs, compensation for damage done to the coach — drunken cabby having turned up, of course, to testify against us. Well, we paid the money, and handed the worthy magistrate twenty francs besides, for the benefit of the poor, by way of acknowledgment for the imperial hospitality we had enjoyed. We were then allowed to depart in peace.

"Now, you'll hardly believe it, I dare say, but it is the truth notwithstanding, that we three, who have been fast friends for years, actually began to quarrel among ourselves now, mutually imputing to one another the blame of all our misadventures and misfortunes since our arrival in Paris, while yet we clearly knew and felt, each and every of us, that it was all the doings of that phantom fourth.

"One thing, however, we all agreed to do — to leave Paris by the first train.

"To fortify ourselves for the coming journey, we went to indulge in the luxury of a farewell breakfast at Désiré Beaurain's. Of course we emptied a few bottles to our reconciliation. I do not exactly remember how many, but this I *do* remember, that our irrepressible incubus walked in again, and took his place in the midst of us rather sooner even than he had been wont to do; and he never left us from that time to the moment of our landing at Dover harbor, when he took his, I hope and trust final, departure with a ghastly grin.

"I dare say you must have thought us a most noisy and obstreperous lot: well, with my hand on my heart, I can assure you, on my conscience, that a quieter and milder set of fellows than us three you are not likely to find on this or the other side the Channel. But for that mysterious phantom fourth — —"

Here the whistle sounded, and the guard came up to us with a hurried, "Now then, gents, take your seats, please; train is off in half a minnit!"

"What can have become of Topp and Jack Hobson?" muttered my new friend, looking around him with eager scrutiny. "I should not wonder if they were still refreshing." And he started off in the direction of the refreshment-room.

I took my seat. Immediately after the train whirled off. I cannot say whether the three were left behind; all I know is that I did not see them get out at London Bridge.

Remembering, however, that the appalling secret of the supernatural visitation which had thus harassed my three fellow-travellers had been confided to me under the impression that I might be likely to find a solution of the mystery, I have ever since deeply pondered thereon.

Shallow thinkers, and sneerers uncharitably given, may, from a consideration of the times, places, and circumstances at and under which the abnormal phenomena here recited were stated to have been observed, be led to attribute them simply to the promptings and imaginings of brains overheated by excessive indulgence in spirituous liquors. But I, striving to be mindful always of the great scriptural injunction to judge not, lest we be judged, and opportunely remembering my friend O'Kweene's learned dissertation above alluded to, feel disposed to pronounce the apparition of the phantom of the fourth man, and all the sayings, doings, and demeanings of the same, to have been simply so many visible and palpable outward manifestations of the inner consciousness of the souls of the three, and more notably of that of the elderly senior of the party, in a succession of vinolcoholic trances.

My friend O'Kweene is, of course, welcome to such credit as may attach to this attempted solution of mine.

THE SPIRIT'S WHISPER.

YES, I have been haunted! — haunted so fearfully that for some little time I thought myself insane. I was no raving maniac; I mixed in society as heretofore, although perhaps a trifle more grave and taciturn than usual; I pursued my daily avocations; I employed myself even on literary work. To all appearance I was one of the sanest of the sane; and yet all the while I considered myself the victim of such strange delusions that, in my own mind, I fancied my senses — and one sense in particular — so far erratic and beyond my own control that I was, in real truth, a madman. How far I was then insane it must be for others, who hear my story, to decide. My hallucinations have long since left me, and, at all events, I am now as sane as I suppose most men are.

My first attack came on one afternoon when, being in a listless and an idle mood, I had risen from my work and was amusing myself with speculating at my window on the different personages who were passing before me. At that time I occupied apartments in the Brompton Road. Perhaps, there is no thoroughfare in London where the ordinary passengers are of so varied a description or high life and low life mingle in so perpetual a medley. South-Kensington carriages there jostle costermongers' carts; the clerk in the public office, returning to his suburban dwelling, brushes the laborer coming from his work on the never-ending modern constructions in the new district; and the ladies of some of the surrounding squares flaunt the most gigantic of *chignons*, and the most exuberant of motley dresses, before the envying eyes of the ragged girls with their vegetable-baskets.

There was, as usual, plenty of material for observation and conjecture in the passengers, and their characters or destinations, from my window on that day. Yet I was not in the right cue for the thorough enjoyment of my favorite amusement. I was in a rather melancholy mood. Somehow or other, I don't know why, my memory had reverted to a pretty woman whom I had not seen for many years. She had been my first love, and I had loved her with a boyish passion as genuine as it was intense. I thought my heart would have broken, and I certainly talked seriously of dying, when she formed an attachment to an ill-conditioned, handsome young adventurer, and, on her family objecting to such an alliance, eloped with him. I had never seen the fellow, against whom, however, I cherished a hatred almost as intense as my passion for the infatuated girl who had flown from her home for his sake. We had heard of her being on the Continent with her husband, and learned that the man's shifty life had eventually taken him to the East. For some years nothing more had been heard of the poor girl. It was a melancholy history, and its memory ill-disposed me for amusement.

A sigh was probably just escaping my lips with the half-articulated words, "Poor Julia!" when my eyes fell on a man passing before my window. There was nothing particularly striking about him. He was tall, with fine features, and a long, fair beard, contrasting somewhat with his bronzed complexion. I had seen many of our officers on their return from the Crimea look much the same. Still, the man's aspect gave me a shuddering feeling, I didn't know why. At the same moment, a whispering, low voice uttered aloud in my ear the words, "It is he!" I turned, startled; there was no one near me, no one in the room. There was no fancy in the sound; I had heard the words with painful distinctness. I ran to the door, opened it — not a sound on the staircase, not a sound in the whole house — nothing but the hum from the street. I came back and sat down. It was no use reasoning with myself; I had the ineffaceable conviction that I had heard the voice. Then first the idea crossed my mind that I might be the victim of hallucinations. Yes, it must have been so, for now I recalled to mind that the voice had been that of my poor lost Julia; and at the moment I heard it I had been dreaming of her. I questioned my own state of health. I was well; at least I had been so, I felt fully assured, up to that moment. Now a feeling of chilliness and numbness and faintness had crept over me, a cold sweat was on my forehead. I tried to shake off this feeling by bringing back my thoughts to some other subject. But, involuntarily as it were, I again uttered the words, "Poor Julia!" aloud. At the same time a deep and heavy sigh, almost a groan, was distinctly audible close by me. I sprang up; I was alone — quite alone. It was, once more, an hallucination.

By degrees the first painful impression wore away. Some days had passed, and I had begun to forget my singular delusion. When my thoughts aid revert to it, the recollection was dismissed as that of a ridiculous fancy. One afternoon I was in the Strand, coming from Charing Cross, when I was once more overcome by that peculiar feeling of cold and numbness which I had before experienced. The day was warm and bright and genial, and yet I positively shivered. I had scarce time to interrogate my own strange sensations when a man went by me rapidly. How was it that I recognized him at once as the individual who had only passed my window so casually on that morning of the hallucination? I don't know, and yet I was aware that this man was the tall, fair passer-by of the Brompton Road. At the same moment the voice I had previously heard whispered distinctly in my ear the words, "Follow him!" I stood stupefied. The usual throngs of indifferent persons were hurrying past me in that crowded thoroughfare, but I felt convinced that not one of these had spoken to me. I remained transfixed for a moment. I was bent on a matter of business in the contrary direction to the individual I had remarked, and so, although with unsteady step, I endeavored to proceed on my way. Again that voice said, still more emphatically, in my ear, "Follow him!" I stopped involuntarily. And a third time, "Follow him!" I told myself that the sound was a delusion, a cheat of my senses, and yet I could not resist the spell. I turned to follow. Quickening my pace, I soon came up with the tall, fair man, and, unremarked by him, I followed him. Whither was this foolish pursuit to lead me? It was useless to ask myself the question — I was impelled to follow.

I was not destined to go very far, however. Before long the object of my absurd chase entered a well-known insurance-office. I stopped at the door of the establishment. I had no business within, why should I continue to follow? Had I not already been making a sad fool of myself by my ridiculous conduct? These were my thoughts as I stood heated by my quick walk. Yes, heated; and yet, once more, came the sudden chill. Once more that same low but now awful voice spoke in my ear: "Go in!" it said. I endeavored to resist the spell, and yet I felt that resistance was in vain. Fortunately, as it seemed to me, the thought crossed my mind that an old acquaintance was a clerk in that same insurance-office. I had not seen the fellow for a great length of time, and I never had been very intimate with him. But here was a pretext; and so I went in and inquired for Clement Stanley. My acquaintance came forward. He was very busy, he said. I invented, on the spur of the moment, some excuse of the most frivolous and absurd nature, as far as I can recollect, for my intrusion.

"By the way," I said, as I turned to take my leave, although my question was "by the way" of nothing at all, "who was that tall, fair man who just now entered the office?"

"Oh, that fellow?" was the indifferent reply; "a Captain Campbell, or Canton, or some such name; I forget what. He is gone in before the board — insured his wife's life — and she is dead; comes for a settlement, I suppose."

There was nothing more to be gained, and so I left the office. As soon as I came without into the scorching sunlight, again the same feeling of cold, again the same voice— "Wait!" Was I going mad? More and more the conviction forced itself upon me that I was decidedly a monomaniac already. I felt my pulse. It was agitated and yet not feverish. I was determined not to give way to this absurd hallucination; and yet, so far was I out of my senses, that my will was no longer my own. Resolved as I was to go, I listened to the dictates of that voice and waited. What was it to me that this Campbell or Canton had insured his wife's life, that she was dead, and that he wanted a settlement of his claim? Obviously nothing; and I yet waited.

So strong was the spell on me that I had no longer any count of time. I had no consciousness whether the period was long or short that I stood there near the door, heedless of all the throng that passed, gazing on vacancy. The fiercest of policemen might have told me to "move on," and I should not have stirred, spite of all the terrors of the "station." The individual came forth. He paid no heed to me. Why should he? What was I to him? This time I needed no warning voice to bid me follow. I was a madman, and I could not resist the impulses of my madness. It was thus, at least I reasoned with myself. I followed into Regent Street. The object of my insensate observation lingered, and looked around as if in expectation. Presently a fine-looking woman, somewhat extravagantly dressed, and obviously not a lady, advanced toward him on the pavement. At the sight of her he quickened his step, and joined her rapidly. I shuddered again, but this time a sort of dread was mingled with that strange shivering. I knew what was coming, and it came. Again that voice in my ear. "Look and remember!" it said. I passed the man and woman as they stopped at their first meeting!

"Is all right, George?" said the female.

"All right, my girl," was the reply.

I looked. An evil smile, as if of wicked triumph, was on the man's face, I thought. And on the woman's? I looked at her, and I remembered. I could not be mistaken. Spite of her change in manner, dress, and appearance, it was Mary Simms. This woman some years before, when she was still very young, had been a sort of humble companion to my mother. A simple-minded, honest girl, we thought her. Sometimes I had fancied that she had paid me, in a sly way, a marked attention. I had been foolish enough to be flattered by her stealthy glances and her sighs. But I had treated these little demonstrations of partiality as due only to a silly girlish fancy. Mary Simms, however, had come to grief in our household. She had been detected in the abstraction of sundry jewels and petty ornaments. The morning after discovery she had left the house, and we had heard of her no more. As these recollections passed rapidly through my mind I looked behind me. The couple had turned back. I turned to follow again; and spite of carriages and cabs, and shouts and oaths of drivers, I took the middle of the street in order to pass the man and woman at a little distance unobserved. No; I was not mistaken. The woman was Mary Simms, though without any trace of all her former simple-minded airs; Mary Simms, no longer in her humble attire, but flaunting in all the finery of overdone fashion. She wore an air of reckless joyousness in her face; and yet, spite of that, I pitied her. It was clear she had fallen on the evil ways of bettered fortune — bettered, alas! for the worse.

I had an excuse now, in my own mind, for my continued pursuit, without deeming myself an utter madman — the excuse of curiosity to know the destiny of one with whom I had been formerly familiar, and in whom I had taken an interest. Presently the game I was hunting down stopped at the door of the Grand Café. After a little discussion they entered. It was a public place of entertainment; there was no reason why I should not enter also. I found my way to the first floor. They were already seated at a table, Mary holding the *carte* in her hand. They were about to dine. Why should not I dine there too? There was but one little objection, — I had an engagement to dinner. But the strange impulse which overpowered me, and seemed leading me on step by step, spite of myself, quickly overruled all the dictates of propriety toward my intended hosts. Could I not send a prettily devised apology? I glided past the couple, with my head averted, seeking a table, and I was unobserved by my old acquaintance. I was too agitated to eat, but I made a semblance, and little heeded the air of surprise and almost disgust on the bewildered face of the waiter as he bore away the barely touched dishes. I was in a very fever of impatience and doubt what next to do. They still sat on, in evident enjoyment of their meal and their constant draughts of sparkling wine. My impatience was becoming almost unbearable when the man at last rose. The woman seemed to have uttered some expostulation, for he turned at the door and said somewhat harshly aloud, "Nonsense; only one game and I shall be back. The waiter will give you a paper — a magazine — something to while away the time." And he left the room for the billiard-table, as I surmised.

Now was my opportunity. After a little hesitation, I rose, and planted myself abruptly on the vacant seat before the woman.

"Mary," I said.

She started, with a little exclamation of alarm, and dropped the paper she had held. She knew me at once.

"Master John!" she exclaimed, using the familiar term still given me when I was long past boyhood; and then, after a lengthened gaze, she turned away her head. I was embarrassed at first how to address her.

"Mary," I said at last, "I am grieved to see you thus."

"Why should you be grieved for me?" she retorted, looking at me sharply, and speaking in a tone of impatient anger. "I am happy as I am."

"I don't believe you," I replied.

She again turned away her head.

"Mary," I pursued, "can you doubt, that, spite of all, I have still a strong interest in the companion of my youth?"

She looked at me almost mournfully, but did not speak. At that moment I probably grew pale; for suddenly that chilly fit seized me again, and my forehead became clammy. That voice sounded again in my ear: "Speak of him!" were the words it uttered. Mary gazed on me with surprise, and yet I was assured that *she* had not heard that voice, so plain to me. She evidently mistook the nature of my visible emotion.

"O Master John!" she stammered, with tears gathering in her eyes, reverting again to that name of bygone times, "if you had loved me then — if you had consoled my true affection with one word of hope, one look of loving-kindness — if you had not spurned and crushed me, I should not have been what I am now."

I was about to make some answer to this burst of unforgettotten passion, when the voice came again: "Speak of him!"

"You have loved others since," I remarked, with a coldness which seemed cruel to myself. "You love *him* now." And I nodded my head toward the door by which the man had disappeared.

"Do I?" she said, with a bitter smile. "Perhaps; who knows?"

"And yet no good can come to you from a connection with that man," I pursued.

"Why not? He adores me, and he is free," was her answer, given with a little triumphant air.

"Yes," I said, "I know he is free: he has lately lost his wife. He has made good his claim to the sum for which he insured her life."

Mary grew deadly pale. "How did you learn this? what do you know of him?" she stammered.

I had no reply to give. She scanned my face anxiously for some time; then in a low voice she added, "What do you suspect?"

I was still silent, and only looked at her fixedly.

"You do not speak," she pursued nervously. "Why do you not speak? Ah, you know more than you would say! Master John, Master John, you might set my tortured mind at rest, and clear or confirm those doubts which *will* come into my poor head, spite of myself. Speak out — O, do speak out!"

"Not here; it is impossible," I replied, looking around. The room as the hour advanced, was becoming more thronged with guests, and the full tables gave a pretext for my reticence, when in truth I had nothing to say.

"Will you come and see me — will you?" she asked with earnest entreaty.

I nodded my head.

"Have you a pocketbook? I will write you my address; and you will come — yes, I am sure you will come!" she said in an agitated way.

I handed her my pocketbook and pencil; she wrote rapidly.

"Between the hours of three and five," she whispered, looking uneasily at the door; "*he* is sure not to be at home."

I rose; Mary held out her hand to me, then withdrew it hastily with an air of shame, and the tears sprang into her eyes again. I left the room hurriedly, and met her companion on the stairs.

That same evening, in the solitude of my own room, I pondered over the little event of the day. I had calmed down from my state of excitement. The living apparition of Mary Simms occupied my mind almost to the exclusion of the terrors of the ghostly voice which had haunted me, and my own fears of coming insanity. In truth, what was that man to me? Nothing. What did his doings matter to such a perfect stranger as myself? Nothing. His connection with Mary Simms was our only link; and in what should that affect me? Nothing again. I debated with myself whether it were not foolish of me to comply with my youthful companion's request to visit her; whether it were not imprudent in me to take any further interest in the lost woman; whether there were not even danger in seeking to penetrate mysteries which were no concern of mine. The resolution to which I came pleased me, and I said aloud, "No, I will not go!"

At the same moment came again the voice like an awful echo to my words — "Go!" It came so suddenly and so imperatively, almost without any previous warning of the usual shudder, that the shock was more than I could bear. I believe I fainted; I know I found myself, when I came to consciousness, in my armchair, cold and numb, and my candles had almost burned down into their sockets.

The next morning I was really ill. A sort of low fever seemed to have prostrated me, and I would have willingly seized so valid a reason for disobeying, at least for that day — for some days, perhaps — the injunction of that ghostly voice. But all that morning it never left me. My fearful chilly fit was of constant recurrence, and the words "Go! go! go!" were murmured so perpetually in my ears — the sound was one of such urgent entreaty — that all force of will gave way completely. Had I remained in that lone room, I should have gone wholly mad. As yet, to my own feelings, I was but partially out of my senses.

I dressed hastily; and, I scarce know how — by no effort of my own will, it seemed to me — I was in the open air. The address of Mary Simms was in a street not far from my own suburb. Without any power of reasoning, I found myself before the door of the house. I knocked, and asked a slipshod girl who opened the door to me for "Miss Simms." She knew no such person, held a brief shrill colloquy with some female in the back-parlor, and, on coming back, was about to shut the door in my face, when a voice from above — the voice of her I sought — called down the stairs, "Let the gentleman come up!"

I was allowed to pass. In the front drawingroom I found Mary Simms.

"They do not know me under that name," she said with a mournful smile, and again extended, then withdrew, her hand.

"Sit down," she went on to say, after a nervous pause. "I am alone now; told I adjure you, if you have still one latent feeling of old kindness for me, explain your words of yesterday to me."

I muttered something to the effect that I had no explanation to give. No words could be truer; I had not the slightest conception what to say.

"Yes, I am sure you have; you must, you will," pursued Mary excitedly; "you have some knowledge of that matter."

"What matter?" I asked.

"Why, the insurance," she replied impatiently. "You know well what I mean. My mind has been distracted about it. Spite of myself, terrible suspicions have forced themselves on me. No; I don't mean that," she cried, suddenly checking herself and changing her tone; "don't heed what I said; it was madness in me to say what I did. But do, do, do tell me all you know."

The request was a difficult one to comply with, for I knew nothing. It is impossible to say what might have been the end of this strange interview, in which I began to feel myself an unwilling impostor; but suddenly Mary started.

"The noise of the latchkey in the lock!" she cried, alarmed; "He has returned; he must not see you; you must come another time. Here, here, be quick! I'll manage him."

And before I could utter another word she had pushed me into the back drawingroom and closed the door. A man's step on the stairs; then voices. The man was begging Mary to come out with him, as the day was so fine. She excused herself; he would hear no refusal. At last she appeared to consent, on condition that the man would assist at her toilet. There was a little laughter, almost hysterical on the part of Mary, whose voice evidently quivered with trepidation.

Presently both mounted the upper stairs. Then the thought struck me that I had left my hat in the front room — a sufficient cause for the woman's alarm. I opened the door cautiously, seized my hat, and was about to steal down the stairs, when I was

again spellbound by that numb cold.

"Stay!" said the voice. I staggered back to the other room with my hat, and closed the door.

Presently the couple came down. Mary was probably relieved by discovering that my hat was no longer there, and surmised that I had departed; for I heard her laughing as they went down the lower flight. Then I heard them leave the house.

I was alone in that back drawingroom. Why? what did I want there? I was soon to learn. I felt the chill invisible presence near me; and the voice said, "Search!"

The room belonged to the common representative class of back drawingrooms in "apartments" of the better kind. The only one unfamiliar piece of furniture was an old Indian cabinet; and my eye naturally fell on that. As I stood and looked at it with a strange unaccountable feeling of fascination, again came the voice—"Search!"

I shuddered and obeyed. The cabinet was firmly locked; there was no power of opening it except by burglarious infraction; but still the voice said, "Search!"

A thought suddenly struck me, and I turned the cabinet from its position against the wall. Behind, the woodwork had rotted, and in many portions fallen away, so that the inner drawers were visible. What could my ghostly monitor mean—that I should open those drawers? I would not do such a deed of petty treachery. I turned defiantly, and addressing myself to the invisible as if it were a living creature by my side, I cried, "I must not, will not, do such an act of baseness."

The voice replied, "Search!"

I might have known that, in my state of what I deemed insanity, resistance was in vain. I grasped the most accessible drawer from behind, and pulled it toward me. Uppermost within it lay letters: they were addressed to "Captain Cameron,"—"Captain George Cameron." That name!—the name of Julia's husband, the man with whom she had eloped; for it was he who was the object of my pursuit.

My shuddering fit became so strong that I could scarce hold the papers; and "Search!" was repeated in my ear.

Below the letters lay a small book in a limp black cover. I opened this book with trembling hand; it was filled with manuscript—Julia's well-known handwriting.

"Read!" muttered the voice. I read. There were long entries by poor Julia of her daily life; complaints of her husband's unkindness, neglect, then cruelty. I turned to the last pages: her hand had grown very feeble now, and she was very ill. "George seems kinder now," she wrote; "he brings me all my medicines with his own hand." Later on: "I am dying; I know I am dying: he has poisoned me. I saw him last night through the curtains pour something in my cup; I saw it in his evil eye. I would not drink; I will drink no more; but I feel that I must die."

These were the last words. Below were written, in a man's bold hand, the words "Poor fool!"

This sudden revelation of poor Julia's death and dying thoughts unnerved me quite. I grew colder in my whole frame than ever.

"Take it!" said her voice. I took the book, pushed back the cabinet into its place against the wall, and, leaving that fearful room, stole down the stairs with trembling limbs, and left the house with all the feelings of a guilty thief.

For some days I perused my poor lost Julia's diary again and again. The whole revelation of her sad life and sudden death led but to one conclusion,—she had died of poison by the hands of her unworthy husband. He had insured her life, and then

It seemed evident to me that Mary Simms had vaguely shared suspicions of the same foul deed. On my own mind came conviction. But what could I do next? how bring this evil man to justice? what proof would be deemed to exist in those writings? I was bewildered, weak, irresolute. Like Hamlet, I shrank back and temporized. But I was not feigning madness; my madness seemed but all too real for me. During all this period the wailing of that wretched voice in my ear was almost incessant. O, I must have been mad!

I wandered about restlessly, like the haunted thing I had become. One day I had come unconsciously and without purpose into Oxford Street. My troubled thoughts were suddenly broken in upon by the solicitations of a beggar. With a heart hardened against begging impostors, and under the influence of the shock rudely given to my absorbing dreams, I answered more hardly than was my wont. The man heaved a heavy sigh, and sobbed forth, "Then Heaven help me!" I caught sight of him before he turned away. He was a ghastly object, with fever in his hollow eyes and sunken cheeks, and fever on his dry, chapped lips. But I knew, or fancied I knew, the tricks of the trade, and I was obdurate. Why, I asked myself, should the cold shudder come over me at such a moment? But it was so strong on me as to make me shake all over. It came—that maddening voice. "Succor!" it said now. I had become so accustomed already to address the ghostly voice that I cried aloud, "Why, Julia, why?" I saw people laughing in my face at this strange cry, and I turned in the direction in which the beggar had gone. I just caught sight of him as he was tottering down a street toward Soho. I determined to have pity for this once, and followed the poor man. He led me on through I know not what streets. His steps were hurried now. In one street I lost sight of him; but I felt convinced he must have turned into a dingy court. I made inquiries, but for a time received only rude jeering answers from the rough men and women whom I questioned. At last a little girl informed me that I must mean the strange man who lodged in the garret of a house she pointed out to me. It was an old dilapidated building, and I had much repugnance on entering it. But again I was no master of my will. I mounted some creaking stairs to the top of the house, until I could go no further. A shattered door was open; I entered a wretched garret; the object of my search lay now on a bundle of rags on the bare floor. He opened his wild eyes as I approached.

"I have come to succor," I said, using unconsciously the word of the voice; "what ails you?"

"Ails me?" gasped the man; "hunger, starvation, fever."

I was horrified. Hurrying to the top of the stairs, I shouted till I had roused the attention of an old woman. I gave her money to bring me food and brandy, promising her a recompense for her trouble.

"Have you no friends?" I asked the wretched man as I returned.

"None," he said feebly. Then as the fever rose in his eyes and even flushed his pallid face, he said excitedly, "I had a master once—one I perilled my soul for. He knows I am dying; but, spite of all my letters, he will not come. He wants me dead, he wants me dead—and his wish is coming to pass now."

"Cannot I find him—bring him here?" I asked.

The man stared at me, shook his head, and at last, as if collecting his faculties with much exertion, muttered, "Yes; it is a last hope; perhaps you may, and I can be revenged on him at least. Yes revenged. I have threatened him already." And the fellow laughed a wild laugh.

"Control yourself," I urged, kneeling by his side; "give me his name — his address."

"Captain George Cameron," he gasped, and then fell back.

"Captain George Cameron!" I cried. "Speak! what of him?"

But the man's senses seemed gone; he only muttered incoherently. The old woman returned with the food and spirits. I had found one honest creature in that foul region. I gave her money — provide her more if she would bring a doctor. She departed on her new errand. I raised the man's head, moistened his lips with the brandy, and then poured some of the spirit down his throat. He gulped at it eagerly, and opened his eyes; but he still raved incoherently, "I did not do it, it was he. He made me buy the poison; he dared not risk the danger himself, the coward! I knew what he meant to do with it, and yet I did not speak; I was her murderer too. Poor Mrs. Cameron! poor Mrs. Cameron! do you forgive? — can you forgive?" And the man screamed aloud and stretched out his arms as if to fright away a phantom.

I had drunk in every word, and knew the meaning of those broken accents well. Could I have found at last the means of bringing justice on the murderer's head? But the man was raving in a delirium, and I was obliged to hold him with all my strength. A step on the stairs. Could it be the medical man I had sent for? That would be indeed a blessing. A man entered — it was Cameron!

He came in jauntily, with the words, "How now, Saunders, you rascal! What more do you want to get out of me?"

He started at the sight of a stranger.

I rose from my kneeling posture like an accusing spirit. I struggled for calm; but passion beyond my control mastered me, and was I not a madman? I seized him by the throat, with the words, "Murderer! poisoner! where is Julia?" He shook me off violently.

"And who the devil are you, sir?" he cried.

"That murdered woman's cousin!" I rushed at him again.

"Lying hound!" he shouted, and grappled me. His strength was far beyond mine. He had his hand on my throat; a crimson darkness was in my eyes; I could not see, I could not hear; there was a torrent of sound pouring in my ears. Suddenly his grasp relaxed. When I recovered my sight, I saw the murderer struggling with the fever-stricken man, who had risen from the floor, and seized him from behind. This unexpected diversion saved my life; but the ex-groom was soon thrown back on the ground.

"Captain George Cameron," I cried, "kill me, but you will only heap another murder on your head!"

He advanced on me with something glittering in his hand. Without a word he came and stabbed at me; but at the same moment I darted at him a heavy blow. What followed was too confused for clear remembrance. I saw — no, I will say I fancied that I saw — the dim form of Julia Staunton standing between me and her vile husband. Did he see the vision too? I cannot say. He reeled back, and fell heavily to the floor. Maybe it was only my blow that felled him. Then came confusion — a dream of a crowd of people — policemen — muttered accusations. I had fainted from the wound in my arm.

Captain George Cameron was arrested. Saunders recovered, and lived long enough to be the principal witness on his trial. The murderer was found guilty. Poor Julia's diary, too, which I had abstracted, told fearfully against him. But he contrived to escape the gallows; he had managed to conceal poison on his person, and he was found dead in his cell. Mary Simms I never saw again. I once received a little scrawl, "I am at peace now, Master John. God bless you!"

I have had no more hallucinations since that time; the voice has never come again. I found out poor Julia's grave, and, as I stood and wept by its side, the cold shudder came over me for the last time. Who shall tell me whether I was once really mad, or whether I was not?

DOCTOR FEVERSHAM'S STORY.

"I HAVE made a point all my life," said the doctor, "of believing nothing of the kind."

Much ghost-talk by firelight had been going on in the library at Fordwick Chase, when Doctor Feversham made this remark.

"As much as to say," observed Amy Fordwick, "that you are afraid to tackle the subject, because you pique yourself on being strong-minded, and are afraid of being convinced against your will."

"Not precisely, young lady. A man convinced against his will is in a different state of mind from mine in matters like these. But it is true that cases in which the supernatural element appears at first sight to enter are so numerous in my profession, that I prefer accepting only the solutions of science, so far as they go, to entering on any wild speculations which it would require more time than I should care to devote to them to trace to their origin."

"But without entering fully into the why and wherefore, how can you be sure that the proper treatment is observed in the numerous cases of mental hallucination which must come under your notice?" inquired Latimer Fordwick, who was studying for the Bar.

"I content myself, my young friend, with following the rules laid down for such cases, and I generally find them successful," answered the old Doctor.

"Then you admit that cases have occurred within your knowledge of which the easiest apparent solution could be one which involved a belief in supernatural agencies?" persisted Latimer, who was rather prolix and pedantic in his talk.

"I did not say so," said the Doctor.

"But of course he meant us to infer it," said Amy. "Now, my dear old Doctor, do lay aside professional dignity, and give us one good ghost-story out of your personal experience. I believe you have been dying to tell one for the last hour, if you would only confess it."

"I would rather not help to fill that pretty little head with idle fancies, dear child," answered the old man, looking fondly at Amy, who was his especial pet and darling.

"Nonsense! You know I am even painfully unimaginative and matter-of-fact; and as for idle fancies, is it an idle fancy to think you like to please me?" said Amy coaxingly.

"Well, after all, you have been frightening each other with so many thrilling tales for the last hour or two, that I don't suppose I should do much harm by telling you a circumstance which happened to me when I was a young man, and has always rather puzzled me."

A murmur of approval ran round the party. All disposed themselves to listen; and Doctor Feversham, after a prefatory pinch of snuff, began.

"In my youth I resided for some time with a family in the north of England, in the double capacity of secretary and physician. While I was going through the hospitals of Paris I became acquainted with my employer, whom I will call Sir James Collingham, under rather peculiar circumstances, which have nothing to do with my story. He had an only daughter, who was about sixteen when I first entered the family, and it was on her account that Sir James wished to have some person with a competent knowledge of medicine and physiology as one of his household. Miss Collingham was subject to fits of a very peculiar kind, which threw her into a sort of trance, lasting from half an hour to three or even four days, according to the severity of the visitation. During these attacks she occasionally displayed that extraordinary phenomenon which goes by the name of clairvoyance. She saw scenes and persons who were far distant, and described them with wonderful accuracy. Though quite unconscious of all outward things, and apparently in a state of the deepest insensibility, she would address remarks to those present which bore reference to the thoughts then occupying their minds, though they had given them no outward expression; and her remarks showed an insight into matters which had perhaps been carefully kept secret, which might truly be termed preternatural. Under these circumstances, Sir James was very unwilling to bring her into contact with strangers when it could possibly be avoided; and the events which first brought us together, having also led to my treating Miss Collingham rather successfully in a severe attack of her malady, induced her father to offer me a position in his household which, as a young, friendless man, I was very willing to accept.

"Collingham-Westmore was a very ancient house of great extent, and but indifferently kept in repair. The country surrounding it is of great natural beauty, thinly inhabited, and, especially at the time I speak of, before railways had penetrated so far north, somewhat lonely and inaccessible. A group of small houses clustered round the village church of Westmorton, distant about three miles from the mansion of the Collingham family; and a solitary posting-house, on what was then the great north road, could be reached by a horseman in about an hour, though the only practicable road for carriages was at least fifteen miles from the highway to Collingham-Westmore. Wild and lovely in the eyes of an admirer of nature were the hills and 'cloughs' among which I pursued my botanical studies for many a long, silent summer day. My occupations at the mansion — everybody called it the mansion, and I must do so from force of habit, though it sounds rather like a house-agent's advertisement — were few and light; the society was not particularly to my taste, and the fine old library only attracted me on rainy days, of which, truth to say, we had our full share.

"The Collingham family circle comprised a maiden aunt of Sir James, Miss Patricia, a stern and awful specimen of the female sex in its fossil state; her ward, Miss Henderson, who, having long passed her pupilage, remained at Collingham-Westmore in the capacity of gouvernante and companion to the young heiress; the heiress aforesaid, and myself. A priest — did I say that the Collinghams still professed the old religion? — came on Sundays and holydays to celebrate mass in the gloomy old chapel; but neighbors there were none, and only about half-a-dozen times during the four years I was an inmate of the mansion were strangers introduced into the family party."

"How dreadfully dull it must have been!" exclaimed Amy sympathetically.

"It *was* dull," answered the Doctor. "Even with my naturally cheerful disposition, and the course of study with which I methodically filled up all my leisure hours except those devoted to out-of-door exercise, the gloom of the old mansion weighed

upon me till I sometimes felt that I must give up my situation at all risks, and return to the world, though it were to struggle with poverty and friendlessness.

"There was no lack of dismal legends and superstitions connected with the mansion, and every trifling circumstance that occurred was twisted into an omen or presage, whether of good or evil, by the highly wrought fancy of Miss Patricia. These absurdities, together with the past grandeur of their house, and the former glories of their religion, formed the staple subjects of conversation when the family was assembled; and as I became more intimately acquainted with the state of my patient, I felt convinced that the atmosphere of gloomy superstition in which she had been reared had fostered, even if it had not altogether been the cause of, her morbid mental and bodily condition.

"Among the many legends connected with the mansion, one seemed to have a peculiar fascination for Miss Collingham, perhaps because it was the most ghastly and repulsive. One wing of the house was held to be haunted by the spirit of an ancestress of the family, who appeared in the shape of a tall woman, with one hand folded in her white robe and the other pointing upward. It was said, that in a room at the end of the haunted wing this lady had been foully murdered by her jealous husband. The window of the apartment overhung the wild wooded side of one of the 'cloughs' common in the country; and tradition averred that the victim was thrown from this window by her murderer. As she caught hold of the sill in a last frantic struggle for life, he severed her hand at the wrist, and the mutilated body fell, with one fearful shriek, into the depth below. Since then, a white shadowy form has forever been sitting at the fatal window, or wandering along the deserted passages of the haunted wing with the bleeding stump folded in her robe; and in moments of danger or approaching death to any member of the Collingham family, the same long, wild shriek rises slowly from the wooded cliff and peals through the mansion; while to different individuals of the house, a pale hand has now and then been visible, laid on themselves or some other of the family, a never-failing omen of danger or death.

"I need not tell you how false and foolish all this dreary superstition appeared to me; and I exerted all my powers of persuasion to induce Miss Patricia to dwell less on these and similar themes in the presence of Miss Collingham. But there seemed to be something in the very air of the gloomy old mansion which fostered such delusions; for when I spoke to Father O'Connor the priest, and urged on him the pernicious effect which was thus produced on my patient's mind, I found him as fully imbued with the spirit of credulity as the most hysterical housemaid of them all. He solemnly declared to me that he had himself repeatedly seen the pale lady sitting at the fatal window, when on his way to and from his home beyond the hills; and moreover, that on the death of Lady Collingham, which occurred at her daughter's birth, he had heard the long, shrill death-scream echo through the mansion while engaged in the last offices of the Church by the bedside of the dying lady.

"So I found it impossible to fight single-handed against these adverse influences, and could only endeavor to divert the mind of my patient into more healthy channels of thought. In this I succeeded perfectly. She became an enthusiastic botanist, and our rambles in search of the rare and lovely specimens which were to be found among the woods and moors surrounding her dwelling did more for her health, both of body and mind, than all the medical skill I could bring to bear on her melancholy case.

"Four years had elapsed since I first took up my abode at Collingham-Westmore. Miss Collingham had grown from a sickly child into a singularly graceful young woman, full of bright intelligence, eager for information, and with scarcely an outward trace remaining of her former fragile health. Still those mysterious swoons occasionally visited her, forming an insurmountable obstacle to her mingling in general society, which she was in all other respects so well fitted to adorn. They occurred without any warning or apparent cause; one moment she would be engaged in animated conversation, and the next, white and rigid as a statue, she would fall back in her chair insensible to all outward objects, but rapt and carried away into a world of her own, whose visions she would sometimes describe in glowing language, although she retained no recollection whatever of them when she returned, as suddenly and at as uncertain a period, to her normal condition. On one of these occasions we were sitting, after dinner, in a large apartment called the summer dining-room. Fruit and wine were on the table, and the last red beams of the setting sun lighted up the distant woods, which were in the first flush of their autumn glory. I turned to remark on the beautiful effect of light to Miss Collingham, and at the very moment I did so she fell back in one of her strange swoons. But instead of the deathlike air which her features usually assumed, a lovely smile lighted them up, and an expression of ecstasy made her beauty appear for the moment almost superhuman. Slowly she raised her right hand, and pointed in the direction of the setting sun. 'He is coming,' she said in soft, clear tones; 'life and light are coming with him, — life and light and liberty!'

"Her hand fell gently by her side; the rapt expression faded from her countenance, and the usual deathlike blank overspread it. This trance passed away like others, and by midnight the house was profoundly still. Soon after that hour a vociferous peal at the great hall-bell roused most of the inmates from sleep. My rooms were in a distant quarter of the house, and a door opposite to that of my bedroom led to the haunted wing, but was always kept locked. I started up on hearing a second ring, and looked out, in hopes of seeing a servant pass, and ascertaining the cause of this unusual disturbance. I saw no one, and after listening for a while to the opening of the hall-door, and the sound of distant voices, I made up my mind that I should be sent for if wanted, and reentered my room. As I was closing the door, I was rather startled to see a tall object, of grayish-white color and indistinct form, issue from the gallery whose door, as I said before, had always been locked in my recollection. For a moment I felt as though rooted to the spot, and a strange sensation crept over me. The next, all trace of the appearance had vanished, and I persuaded myself that what I had seen must have been some effect of light from the open door of my room.

"The cause of the nightly disturbance appeared at breakfast on the following morning in the shape of a remarkably handsome young man, who was introduced by Sir James as his nephew, Don Luis de Cabral, the son of an only sister long dead, who had married a Spaniard of high rank. Don Luis showed but little trace of his southern parentage. If I may so express it, all the depth and warmth of coloring in that portion of his blood which he inherited from his Spanish ancestors came out in the raven-black hair and large lustrous dark eyes, which impressed you at once with their uncommon beauty. For the rest, he was a fine well-grown young man, no darker in complexion than an Englishman might well be, and with a careless, happy boyishness of manner, which won immediately on the regard of strangers, and rendered his presence in the house like that of a perpetual sunbeam. We all wondered, after a little while, what we had done before Luis came among us. He was as a son to Sir James; Miss Patricia softened to this new and pleasing interest in her colorless existence as I could not have believed it was in her fossilized nature to do; Miss Henderson became animated, almost young, under the reviving influence of the youth and

joyousness of our new inmate; and I own that I speedily attached myself with a warm and affectionate regard to the happy, unselfish nature that seemed to brighten all who came near it.

"But the most remarkable effect of the presence of Don Luis de Cabral among us was visible in Miss Collingham. 'Love at first sight,' often considered as a mere phrase, was, in the case of these two young creatures, an unmistakable reality. From the moment of their first meeting, the cousins were mutually drawn toward each other; and seeing the bright and wonderful change wrought by the presence of Don Luis in Blanche Collingham, I could not but remember, with the interest that attaches to a curious psychological phenomenon, the words she uttered in her trance on the eve of his arrival. 'Life, light, and liberty,' indeed, appeared given to all that was best and brightest in her nature. Her health improved visibly, and her beauty, always touching, became radiant in its full development. My duties toward her were now merely nominal; and when, about two months later, Sir James announced to me her approaching marriage, and confessed that it was with this object he had invited Don Luis to come and make the acquaintance of his English relations, the strong opinions I entertained against the marriage of first cousins, and also on the especial inadvisability of any project of marriage in the case of Miss Collingham, could not prevent my hearty rejoicing in the fair prospect of happiness in which two persons who deeply interested me were indulging.

"Winter set in early and severely that year among our northern hills, and with a view to Blanche's removal from its withering influence, which I always considered prejudicial to her, the preparations for the marriage were hurried on, and the ceremony was fixed to take place about the middle of December. The travelling-carriage which was to convey the young couple on their way southward was to arrive at the nearest railway-station — then more than thirty miles distant — a week before the marriage; and as some important portions of the trousseau, together with a valuable package of jewels intended by Don Luis as presents for his bride, were expected at the same time, the young man announced his intention of riding across the hills to ———, in order to superintend the conveyance of the carriage and its contents along the rough mountain roads that it must traverse.

"We were all sitting around the great fireplace in the winter parlor on the evening before his departure. Miss Collingham had been languid and depressed throughout the day, and often adverted to the long wintry ride he was to undertake in a strain of apprehension at which Don Luis laughed gayly. To divert her mind, he recounted various adventures which had befallen him in foreign lands, with a vigorous simplicity of description which enchained her attention and interested us all.

"Suddenly, so sitting, Miss Collingham leaned forward, and in a changed, eager voice exclaimed, 'Luis, take away your hand from your throat!'

"We looked. Luis' hands were lying one over the other on his knee in a careless attitude that was habitual to him.

"Take it away, I say! Oh, take it away!"

"Miss Collingham started to her feet as she uttered these words almost in a shriek, and then fell back rigid and senseless, her outstretched hand still pointing to her betrothed.

"The fit was a severe one, but by morning it had yielded to remedies, and Luis set off early on his ride, to make the most of the short daylight, and intending to return with the carriage on the morrow. All that day Miss Collingham remained in a half-conscious state. It was a dreary day of gloom, with a piercing north wind, and toward evening the snow began to fall in those close, compact flakes which forebode a heavy storm. We were glad to think that Luis must have reached his destination before it began; but when the next morning dawned on a wide expanse of snow, and the air was still thick with fast-falling flakes, it was feared that the state of the roads would preclude all hope of the arrival of the carriage on that day.

"My patient took no heed of the untoward state of the weather. She was still in a drowsy condition, very unlike that which usually succeeded her attacks, and Miss Henderson, who had watched by her through the night, told me she spoke more than once in a strange, excited manner, as though carrying on a conversation with some one whom she appeared to see by her bedside. As the good lady, however, could give but a very imperfect and incoherent account of what had passed, I was left in some doubt as to whether Miss Collingham had seen more or Miss Henderson less than there really was to be seen, as I had before had reason to believe that she was not a very vigilant nurse.

"So the hours went on, and night closed in. Sir James began to feel some uneasiness at the non-appearance, not only of Don Luis, but also of the priest, who was to have arrived at Collingham-Westmore on that day.

"On questioning some of the servants who had been out of the house, the absence of Father O'Connor at least was satisfactorily accounted for: they all declared that it would be quite impossible for those best acquainted with the hills to find their way across them in the blinding drifts which had never ceased throughout the day. We concluded that Father O'Connor and Don Luis were alike storm-stayed, and had no remedy but patience.

"Late in the evening — it must have been near midnight — I was in Miss Collingham's dressing-room with Miss Patricia, who intended to watch by her through the night. We were talking by the fire, of the snow-storm which still continued, and of the hindrance it might prove to the marriage — the day fixed for which was now less than a week distant — when we heard a voice in the adjoining room, where we imagined the object of our care to be sleeping. We went in. Miss Collingham was sitting up in bed, her eyes wide open, in one of her rigid fits. She was speaking rapidly in a low tone, unlike her usual voice.

"You cannot get through all that snow,' she said. 'Get help; there are men not far off with spades. Oh, be careful! You are off the road! Stop, stop! that is the way to Armstrong's Clough. Does not the postboy know the road? He is bewildered. I tell you it is madness to go on. See, one of the horses has fallen; he kicks — he will hit you! Oh, how dark it is! And the snow covers your lantern, and you cannot see the edge. Now the horse is up again, but he cannot go on. Do not beat him, Luis; it is not his fault, poor beast; the snow is too thick, and you are on rough ground. Now he rears — he backs — the other one backs also — the wheel of the carriage is over the edge — ah!'

"The scream with which these wild, hurried words ended seemed to be taken up and echoed from a distance. Miss Patricia stared at me with a ghastly white face of horror, and I felt my blood curdle as that long, shrill, unearthly shriek pealed through the silent passages. It grew louder and nearer, and seemed to sweep through the room, dying away in the opposite direction. Miss Patricia fell forward without a word in a dead faint.

"I looked at Miss Collingham; she had not moved, or shown any sign of hearing or heeding that awful sound. In a few seconds the room was filled with terrified women, roused from their sleep by the weird cry which rang through the house. Miss

Patricia was conveyed by some of them to her own room, where, after much difficulty, we restored her to consciousness. Her first act was to grasp me by the arm.

“Mr. Feversham, for the love of the Holy Virgin do not leave me! I have seen that which I cannot look upon and live.”

“I soothed her as best I might, and at last persuaded her to allow me to leave her with her own maid in order to visit my other patient, promising to return shortly.

“I found no change whatever in Miss Collingham. Sir James was in the room trying to establish some degree of calmness and order among the terrified women. We succeeded in persuading most of them to take a restorative and return to bed, and leaving two of the most self-possessed to watch beside Miss Collingham, who was still completely insensible, we went together to Miss Patricia’s room.

“‘Brother, I have seen her!’ she exclaimed on Sir James’ entrance.

“‘Seen who, my dear Patricia?’

“‘The pale lady — the spectre of our house,’ she replied, shuddering from head to foot. ‘She passed through the room, her hand upraised, and the blood-spots on her garment. Oh, James! my time is come, and Father O’Connor is not here.’

“Sir James did not attempt to combat his sister’s superstitious terrors, but appeared, on the contrary, almost as deeply impressed as herself, and questioned her closely about the apparition. Her answers led to some mention of the strange vision which Miss Collingham was describing in her trance just before the scream was heard. At Sir James’ request I put down in writing, as nearly as I could remember, all she had said, and so great was the impression it made on my mind that I believe I recalled her very words. Knowing all we did of her abnormal condition while in a state of trance, it was impossible not to fear that she might have been describing a scene that was actually occurring at the time; and Sir James determined to send out a party, as soon as daylight came, on the road by which Don Luis must arrive.

“The morning dawned brightly, with a keen frost, and several men were sent off along the road to — with the first rays of light.

“Some hours afterward Father O’Connor arrived, having made his way with considerable difficulty across the hill. Miss Patricia claimed his first attention, for my unhappy charge remained senseless and motionless as ever.

“After a long conference, he came to me with grave looks.

“‘She is at the window this day,’ he said, shaking his head sorrowfully, when I had told him my share of the last night’s singular experiences. ‘The pale lady is there; I saw her as I came by the bridge as plainly as now I see you. We shall have evil tidings of that poor lad before nightfall, or I am strangely mistaken.’

“Evil tidings indeed they were that reached us on the return of some of the exploring-party. They were first attracted from following as nearly as they could the line of road, blocked as it was with drifts of snow by hearing the howling of a dog at some little distance, in the direction of the precipitous ravine which went by the name of ‘Armstrong’s Clough.’ Following the sound, they came upon traces of wheels in the hillside, where no carriage could have gone had it not been for the deep snow which concealed and smoothed away the inequalities of the ground. These marks were traced here and there till they led to the verge of the precipice, where a struggle had evidently taken place, and masses of snow had been dislodged and fallen into the ravine.

“Looking below, the only thing they could see in the waste of snow was a little dog, who was known to be in the habit of running with the posthorses from — , which was scraping wildly in the snow and filling the air with its dismal howlings. A considerable circuit had to be made before the bottom of the clough could be reached, and then the whole tragedy was revealed. There lay the broken carriage, the dead horses, and two stiffened corpses under the snow, that had drifted over and around them.

“I need not pursue the melancholy story; I was an old fool for telling it to you,” said the Doctor.

“But Miss Collingham — what became of her?” asked an eager listener.

“Well, she did not recover,” answered the Doctor with a slight trembling in his voice. “It was a sad matter altogether; and within a short time she lay beside her betrothed in the family vault below the chapel. Sir James broke up his establishment and went abroad, and I never saw any of the family again.”

“And what did you do, Doctor?”

“I went to London, to seek my fortune as best I might; and I hope you may all prosper as well, my young friends.”

“And is it all really true?” asked Amy, who had listened with breathless attention.

“That is the worst of it; it really is,” said the Doctor.

THE SECRET OF THE 2 PLASTER CASTS.

YEARS before the accession of her Majesty Queen Victoria, and yet at not so remote a date as to be utterly beyond the period to which the reminiscences of our middle-aged readers extend, it happened that two English gentlemen sat at table on a summer's evening, after dinner, quietly sipping their wine and engaged in desultory conversation. They were both men known to fame. One of them was a sculptor whose statues adorned the palaces of princes, and whose chiselled busts were the pride of half the nobility of his nation; the other was no less renowned as an anatomist and surgeon. The age of the anatomist might have been guessed at fifty, but the guess would have erred on the side of youth by at least ten years. That of the sculptor could scarcely be more than five-and-thirty. A bust of the anatomist, so admirably executed as to present, although in stone, the perfect similitude of life and flesh, stood upon a pedestal opposite to the table at which sat the pair, and at once explained at least one connecting-link of companionship between them. The anatomist was exhibiting for the criticism of his friend a rare gem which he had just drawn from his cabinet: it was a crucifix magnificently carved in ivory, and incased in a setting of pure gold.

"The carving, my dear sir," observed Mr. Fiddyes, the sculptor, "is indeed, as you say, exquisite. The muscles are admirably made out, the flesh well modelled, wonderfully so for the size and material; and yet — by the bye, on this point you must know more than I — the more I think upon the matter, the more I regard the artistic conception as utterly false and wrong."

"You speak in a riddle," replied Dr. Carnell; "but pray go on, and explain."

"It is a fancy I first had in my student-days," replied Fiddyes. "Conventionality, not to say a most proper and becoming reverence, prevents people by no means ignorant from considering the point. But once think upon it, and you at least, of all men, must at once perceive how utterly impossible it would be for a victim nailed upon a cross by hands and feet to preserve the position invariably displayed in figures of the Crucifixion. Those who so portray it fail in what should be their most awful and agonizing effect. Think for one moment, and imagine, if you can, what would be the attitude of a man, living or dead, under this frightful torture."

"You startle me," returned the great surgeon, "not only by the truth of your remarks, but by their obviousness. It is strange indeed that such a matter should have so long been overlooked. The more I think upon it the more the bare idea of actual crucifixion seems to horrify me, though heaven knows I am accustomed enough to scenes of suffering. How would you represent such a terrible agony?"

"Indeed I cannot tell," replied the sculptor; "to guess would be almost vain. The fearful strain upon the muscles, their utter helplessness and inactivity, the frightful swellings, the effect of weight upon the racked and tortured sinews, appal me too much even for speculation."

"But this," replied the surgeon, "one might think a matter of importance, not only to art, but, higher still, to religion itself."

"Maybe so," returned the sculptor. "But perhaps the appeal to the senses through a true representation might be too horrible for either the one or the other."

"Still," persisted the surgeon, "I should like — say for curiosity — though I am weak enough to believe even in my own motive as a higher one — to ascertain the effect from actual observation."

"So should I, could it be done, and of course without pain to the object, which, as a condition, seems to present at the outset an impossibility."

"Perhaps not," mused the anatomist; "I think I have a notion. Stay — we may contrive this matter. I will tell you my plan, and it will be strange indeed if we two cannot manage to carry it out."

The discourse here, owing to the rapt attention of both speakers, assumed a low and earnest tone, but had perhaps better be narrated by a relation of the events to which it gave rise. Suffice it to say that the Sovereign was more than once mentioned during its progress, and in a manner which plainly told that the two speakers each possessed sufficient influence to obtain the assistance of royalty, and that such assistance would be required in their scheme.

The shades of evening deepened while the two were still conversing. And leaving this scene, let us cast one hurried glimpse at another taking place contemporaneously.

Between Pimlico and Chelsea, and across a canal of which the bed has since been used for the railway terminating at Victoria Station, there was at the time of which we speak a rude timber footway, long since replaced by a more substantial and convenient erection, but then known as the Wooden Bridge. It was named shortly afterward Cutthroat Bridge, and for this reason.

While Mr. Fiddyes and Dr. Carnell were discoursing over their wine, as we have already seen, one Peter Starke, a drunken Chelsea pensioner, was murdering his wife upon the spot we have last indicated. The coincidence was curious.

In those days the punishment of criminals followed closely upon their conviction. The Chelsea pensioner whom we have mentioned was found guilty one Friday and sentenced to die on the following Monday. He was a sad scoundrel, impenitent to the last, glorying in the deeds of slaughter which he had witnessed and acted during the series of campaigns which had ended just previously at Waterloo. He was a tall, well-built fellow enough, of middle age, for his class was not then, as now, composed chiefly of veterans, but comprised many young men, just sufficiently disabled to be unfit for service. Peter Starke, although but slightly wounded, had nearly completed his term of service, and had obtained his pension and presentment to Chelsea Hospital. With his life we have but little to do, save as regards its close, which we shall shortly endeavor to describe far more veraciously, and at some greater length than set forth in the brief account which satisfied the public of his own day, and which, as embodied in the columns of the few journals then appearing, ran thus:

"On Monday last Peter Starke was executed at Newgate for the murder at the Wooden Bridge, Chelsea, with four others for various offences. After he had been hanging only for a few minutes a respite arrived, but although he was promptly cut down, life was pronounced to be extinct. His body was buried within the prison walls."

Thus far history. But the conciseness of history far more frequently embodies falsehood than truth. Perhaps the following narration may approach more nearly to the facts.

A room within the prison had been, upon that special occasion and by high authority, allotted to the use of Dr. Carnell and Mr. Fiddyes, the famous sculptor, for the purpose of certain investigations connected with art and science. In that room Mr. Fiddyes, while wretched Peter Starke was yet swinging between heaven and earth, was busily engaged in arranging a variety of implements and materials, consisting of a large quantity of plaster-of-Paris, two large pails of water, some tubs, and other necessities of the moulder's art. The room contained a large deal table, and a wooden cross, not neatly planed and squared at the angles, but of thick, narrow, rudely-sawn oaken plank, fixed by strong, heavy nails. And while Mr. Fiddyes was thus occupied, the executioner entered, bearing upon his shoulders the body of the wretched Peter, which he flung heavily upon the table.

"You are sure he is dead?" asked Mr. Fiddyes.

"Dead as a herring," replied the other. "And yet just as warm and limp as if he had only fainted."

"Then go to work at once," replied the sculptor, as turning his back upon the hangman, he resumed his occupation.

The "work" was soon done. Peter was stripped and nailed upon the timber, which was instantly propped against the wall.

"As fine a one as ever I see," exclaimed the executioner, as he regarded the defunct murderer with an expression of admiration, as if at his own handiwork, in having abruptly demolished such a magnificent animal. "Drops a good bit for'ard, though. Shall I tie him up round the waist, sir?"

"Certainly not," returned the sculptor. "Just rub him well over with this oil, especially his head, and then you can go. Dr. Carnell will settle with you."

"All right, sir."

The fellow did as ordered, and retired without another word; leaving this strange couple, the living and the dead, in that dismal chamber.

Mr. Fiddyes was a man of strong nerve in such matters. He had been too much accustomed to taking posthumous casts to trouble himself with any sentiment of repugnance at his approaching task of taking what is called a "piece-mould" from a body. He emptied a number of bags of the white powdery plaster-of-Paris into one of the larger vessels, poured into it a pail of water, and was carefully stirring up the mass, when a sound of dropping arrested his ear.

Drip, drip.

"There's something leaking," he muttered, as he took a second pail, and emptying it, again stirred the composition.

Drip, drip, drip.

"It's strange," he soliloquized, half aloud. "There is no more water, and yet — —"

The sound was heard again.

He gazed at the ceiling; there was no sign of damp. He turned his eyes to the body, and something suddenly caused him a violent start. The murderer was bleeding.

The sculptor, spite of his command over himself, turned pale. At that moment the head of Starke moved — clearly moved. It raised itself convulsively for a single moment; its eyes rolled, and it gave vent to a subdued moan of intense agony. Mr. Fiddyes fell fainting on the floor as Dr. Carnell entered. It needed but a glance to tell the doctor what had happened, even had not Peter just then given vent to another low cry. The surgeon's measures were soon taken. Locking the door, he bore a chair to the wall which supported the body of the malefactor. He drew from his pocket a case of glittering instruments, and with one of these, so small and delicate that it scarcely seemed larger than a needle, he rapidly, but dexterously and firmly, touched Peter just at the back of the neck. There was no wound larger than the head of a small pin, and yet the head fell instantly as though the heart had been pierced. The doctor had divided the spinal cord, and Peter Starke was dead indeed.

A few minutes sufficed to recall the sculptor to his senses. He at first gazed wildly upon the still suspended body, so painfully recalled to life by the rough venesection of the hangman and the subsequent friction of anointing his body to prevent the adhesion of the plaster.

"You need not fear now," said Dr. Carnell; "I assure you he is dead."

"But he *was* alive, surely!"

"Only for a moment, and even that scarcely to be called life — mere muscular contraction, my dear sir, mere muscular contraction."

The sculptor resumed his labor. The body was girt at various circumferences with fine twine, to be afterward withdrawn through a thick coating of plaster, so as to separate the various pieces of the mould, which was at last completed; and after this Dr. Carnell skilfully flayed the body, to enable a second mould to be taken of the entire figure, showing every muscle of the outer layer.

The two moulds were thus taken. It is difficult to conceive more ghastly appearances than they presented. For sculptor's work they were utterly useless; for no artist except the most daring of realists would have ventured to indicate the horrors which they presented. Fiddyes refused to receive them. Dr. Carnell, hard and cruel as he was, for kindness' sake, in his profession, was a gentle, genial father of a family of daughters. He received the casts, and at once consigned them to a garret, to which he forbade access. His youngest daughter, one unfortunate day, during her father's absence, was impelled by feminine curiosity — perhaps a little increased by the prohibition — to enter the mysterious chamber.

Whether she imagined in the pallid figure upon the cross a celestial rebuke for her disobedience, or whether she was overcome by the mere mortal horror of one or both of those dreadful casts, can now never be known. But this is true: she became a maniac.

The writer of this has more than once seen (as, no doubt, have many others) the plaster effigies of Peter Starke, after their removal from Dr. Carnell's to a famous studio near the Regent's Park. It was there that he heard whispered the strange story of their origin. Sculptor and surgeon are now both long since dead, and it is no longer necessary to keep *the secret of the two plaster casts*.

WHAT WAS IT?

IT is, I confess, with considerable diffidence that I approached the strange narrative which I am about to relate. The events which I purpose detailing are of so extraordinary a character that I am quite prepared to meet with an unusual amount of incredulity and scorn. I accept all such beforehand. I have, I trust, the literary courage to face unbelief. I have, after mature consideration, resolved to narrate, in as simple and straightforward a manner as I can compass, some facts that passed under my observation, in the month of July last, and which, in the annals of the mysteries of physical science, are wholly unparalleled.

I live at No. — Twenty-sixth Street, in New York. The house is in some respects a curious one. It has enjoyed for the last two years the reputation of being haunted. The house is very spacious. A hall of noble size leads to a large spiral staircase winding through its centre, while the various apartments are of imposing dimensions. It was built some fifteen or twenty years since by Mr. A — , the well-known New York merchant, who five years ago threw the commercial world into convulsions by a stupendous bank fraud. Mr. A — , as every one knows, escaped to Europe, and died not long after, of a broken heart. Almost immediately after the news of his decease reached this country and was verified, the report spread in Twenty-sixth Street that No. — was haunted. Legal measures had dispossessed the widow of its former owner, and it was inhabited merely by a care-taker and his wife, placed there by the house-agent into whose hands it had passed for purposes of renting or sale. These people declared that they were troubled with unnatural noises. Doors were opened without any visible agency. The remnants of furniture scattered through the various rooms were, during the night, piled one upon the other by unknown hands. Invisible feet passed up and down the stairs in broad daylight, accompanied by the rustle of unseen silk dresses, and the gliding of viewless hands along the massive balusters. The care-taker and his wife declared they would live there no longer. The house-agent laughed, dismissed them, and put others in their place. The noises and supernatural manifestations continued. The neighborhood caught up the story, and the house remained untenanted for three years. Several persons negotiated for it; but, somehow, always before the bargain was closed they heard the unpleasant rumors and declined to treat any further.

It was in this state of things that my landlady, who at that time kept a boarding-house in Bleecker Street, and who wished to move farther up town, conceived the bold idea of renting No. — Twenty-sixth Street. Happening to have in her house rather a plucky and philosophical set of boarders, she laid her scheme before us, stating candidly everything she had heard respecting the ghostly qualities of the establishment to which she wished to remove us. With the exception of two timid persons — a sea-captain and a returned Californian, who immediately gave notice that they would leave — all of Mrs. Moffat's guests declared that they would accompany her in her incursion into the abode of spirits.

Our removal was effected in the month of May, and we were charmed with our new residence.

Of course we had no sooner established ourselves at No. — than we began to expect the ghosts. We absolutely awaited their advent with eagerness. Our dinner conversation was supernatural. I found myself a person of immense importance, it having leaked out that I was tolerably well versed in the history of supernaturalism, and had once written a story the foundation of which was a ghost. If a table or wainscot panel happened to warp when we were assembled in the large drawingroom, there was an instant silence, and every one was prepared for an immediate clanking of chains and a spectral form.

After a month of psychological excitement, it was with the utmost dissatisfaction that we were forced to acknowledge that nothing in the remotest degree approaching the supernatural had manifested itself.

Things were in this state when an incident took place so awful and inexplicable in its character that my reason fairly reels at the bare memory of the occurrence. It was the tenth of July. After dinner was over I repaired, with my friend Dr. Hammond, to the garden to smoke my evening pipe. Independent of certain mental sympathies which existed between the doctor and myself, we were linked together by a vice. We both smoked opium. We knew each other's secret and respected it. We enjoyed together that wonderful expansion of thought, that marvellous intensifying of the perceptive faculties, that boundless feeling of existence when we seem to have points of contact with the whole universe — in short, that unimaginable spiritual bliss, which I would not surrender for a throne, and which I hope you, reader, will never — never taste.

On the evening in question, the tenth of July, the doctor and myself drifted into an unusually metaphysical mood. We lit our large meerschaums, filled with fine Turkish tobacco, in the core of which burned a little black nut of opium, that, like the nut in the fairy tale, held within its narrow limits wonders beyond the reach of kings; we paced to and fro, conversing. A strange perversity dominated the currents of our thoughts. They would not flow through the sun-lit channels into which we strove to divert them. For some unaccountable reason, they constantly diverged into dark and lonesome beds, where a continual gloom brooded. It was in vain that, after our old fashion, we flung ourselves on the shores of the East, and talked of its gay bazaars, of the splendors of the time of Haroun, of harems and golden palaces. Black affreets continually arose from the depths of our talk, and expanded, like the one the fisherman released from the copper vessel, until they blotted everything bright from our vision. Insensibly, we yielded to the occult force that swayed us, and indulged in gloomy speculation. We had talked some time upon the proneness of the human mind to mysticism, and the almost universal love of the terrible, when Hammond suddenly said to me, "What do you consider to be the greatest element of terror?"

The question puzzled me. That many things were terrible, I knew. But it now struck me, for the first time, that there must be one great and ruling embodiment of fear — a King of Terrors, to which all others must succumb. What might it be? To what train of circumstances would it owe its existence?

"I confess, Hammond," I replied to my friend, "I never considered the subject before. That there must be one Something more terrible than any other thing, I feel. I cannot attempt, however, even the most vague definition."

"I am somewhat like you, Harry," he answered. "I feel my capacity to experience a terror greater than anything yet conceived by the human mind — something combining in fearful and unnatural amalgamation hitherto supposed incompatible elements. The calling of the voices in Brockden Brown's novel of 'Wieland' is awful; so is the picture of the Dweller on the Threshold, in Bulwer's 'Zanoni;' but," he added, shaking his head gloomily, "there is something more horrible still than these."

"Look here, Hammond," I rejoined, "let us drop this kind of talk, for Heaven's sake! We shall suffer for it, depend on it."

"I don't know what's the matter with me tonight," he replied, "but my brain is running upon all sorts of weird and awful thoughts. I feel as if I could write a story like Hoffman, tonight, if I were only master of a literary style."

"Well, if we are going to be Hoffmanesque in our talk, I'm off to bed. Opium and nightmares should never be brought together. How sultry it is! Goodnight, Hammond."

"Goodnight, Harry. Pleasant dreams to you."

"To you, gloomy wretch, afreets, ghouls, and enchanters."

We parted, and each sought his respective chamber. I undressed quickly and got into bed, taking with me, according to my usual custom, a book over which I generally read myself to sleep. I opened the volume as soon as I had laid my head upon the pillow, and instantly flung it to the other side of the room. It was Goudon's "History of Monsters," — a curious French work, which I had lately imported from Paris, but which, in the state of mind I had then reached, was anything but an agreeable companion. I resolved to go to sleep at once; so, turning down my gas until nothing but a little blue point of light glimmered on the top of the tube, I composed myself to rest.

The room was in total darkness. The atom of gas that still remained alight did not illuminate a distance of three inches round the burner. I desperately drew my arm across my eyes, as if to shut out even the darkness and tried to think of nothing. It was in vain. The confounded themes touched on by Hammond in the garden kept obtruding themselves on my brain. I battled against them. I erected ramparts of would-be blankness of intellect to keep them out. They still crowded upon me. While I was lying still as a corpse, hoping that by a perfect physical inaction I should hasten mental repose, an awful incident occurred. A Something dropped, as it seemed, from the ceiling, plumb upon my chest, and the next instant I felt two bony hands encircling my throat, endeavoring to choke me.

I am no coward, and am possessed of considerable physical strength. The suddenness of the attack, instead of stunning me, strung every nerve to its highest tension. My body acted from instinct, before my brain had time to realize the terrors of my position. In an instant I wound two muscular arms around the creature, and squeezed it, with all the strength of despair, against my chest. In a few seconds the bony hands that had fastened on my throat loosened their hold, and I was free to breathe once more. Then commenced a struggle of awful intensity. Immersed in the most profound darkness, totally ignorant of the nature of the Thing by which I was so suddenly attacked, finding my grasp slipping every moment, by reason, it seemed to me, of the entire nakedness of my assailant, bitten with sharp teeth in the shoulder, neck, and chest, having every moment to protect my throat against a pair of sinewy, agile hands, which my utmost efforts could not confine — these were a combination of circumstances to combat which required all the strength, skill, and courage that I possessed.

At last, after a silent, deadly, exhausting struggle, I got my assailant under by a series of incredible efforts of strength. Once pinned, with my knee on what I made out to be its chest, I knew that I was victor. I rested for a moment to breathe. I heard the creature beneath me panting in the darkness, and felt the violent throbbing of a heart. It was apparently as exhausted as I was; that was one comfort. At this moment I remembered that I usually placed under my pillow, before going to bed, a large yellow silk pocket-handkerchief. I felt for it instantly; it was there. In a few seconds more I had, after a fashion, pinioned the creature's arms.

I now felt tolerably secure. There was nothing more to be done but to turn on the gas, and, having first seen what my midnight assailant was like, arouse the household. I will confess to being actuated by a certain pride in not giving the alarm before; I wished to make the capture alone and unaided.

Never losing my hold for an instant, I slipped from the bed to the floor, dragging my captive with me. I had but a few steps to make to reach the gas-burner; these I made with the greatest caution, holding the creature in a grip like a vice. At last I got within arm's length of the tiny speck of blue light which told me where the gas-burner lay. Quick as lightning I released my grasp with one hand and let on the full flood of light. Then I turned to look at my captive.

I cannot even attempt to give any definition of my sensations the instant after I turned on the gas. I suppose I must have shrieked with terror, for in less than a minute afterward my room was crowded with the inmates of the house. I shudder now as I think of that awful moment. *I saw nothing!* Yes; I had one arm firmly clasped round a breathing, panting, corporeal shape, my other hand gripped with all its strength a throat as warm, and apparently fleshly, as my own; and yet, with this living substance in my grasp, with its body pressed against my own, and all in the bright glare of a large jet of gas, I absolutely beheld nothing! Not even an outline — a vapor!

I do not, even at this hour, realize the situation in which I found myself. I cannot recall the astounding incident thoroughly. Imagination in vain tries to compass the awful paradox.

It breathed. I felt its warm breath upon my cheek. It struggled fiercely. It had hands. They clutched me. Its skin was smooth, like my own. There it lay, pressed close up against me, solid as stone — and yet utterly invisible!

I wonder that I did not faint or go mad on the instant. Some wonderful instinct must have sustained me; for absolutely, in place of loosening my hold on the terrible Enigma, I seemed to gain an additional strength in my moment of horror, and tightened my grasp with such wonderful force that I felt the creature shivering with agony.

Just then Hammond entered my room at the head of the household. As soon as he beheld my face — which, I suppose, must have been an awful sight to look at — he hastened forward, crying, "Great Heaven, what has happened?"

"Hammond! Hammond!" I cried, "come here. Oh, this is awful! I have been attacked in bed by something or other, which I have hold of; but I can't see it — I can't see it!"

Hammond, doubtless struck by the unfeigned horror expressed in my countenance, made one or two steps forward with an anxious yet puzzled expression. A very audible titter burst from the remainder of my visitors. This suppressed laughter made me furious. To laugh at a human being in my position! It was the worst species of cruelty. *Now*, I can understand why the appearance of a man struggling violently, as it would seem, with an airy nothing, and calling for assistance against a vision, should have appeared ludicrous. *Then*, so great was my rage against the mocking crowd that had I the power I would have stricken them dead where they stood.

"Hammond! Hammond!" I cried again, despairingly, "for God's sake come to me. I can hold the — the thing but a short while longer. It is overpowering me. Help me! Help me!"

"Harry," whispered Hammond, approaching me, "you have been smoking too much opium."

"I swear to you, Hammond, that this is no vision," I answered, in the same low tone. "Don't you see how it shakes my whole frame with its struggles? If you don't believe me convince yourself. Feel it — touch it."

Hammond advanced and laid his hand in the spot I indicated. A wild cry of horror burst from him. He had felt it!

In a moment he had discovered somewhere in my room a long piece of cord, and was the next instant winding it and knotting it about the body of the unseen being that I clasped in my arms.

"Harry," he said, in a hoarse, agitated voice, for, though he preserved his presence of mind, he was deeply moved, "Harry, it's all safe now. You may let go, old fellow, if you're tired. The Thing can't move."

I was utterly exhausted, and I gladly loosed my hold.

Hammond stood holding the ends of the cord, that bound the Invisible, twisted round his hand, while before him, self-supporting as it were, he beheld a rope laced and interlaced, and stretching tightly around a vacant space. I never saw a man look so thoroughly stricken with awe. Nevertheless his face expressed all the courage and determination which I knew him to possess. His lips, although white, were set firmly, and one could perceive at a glance that, although stricken with fear, he was not daunted. The confusion that ensued among the guests of the house who were witnesses of this extraordinary scene between Hammond and myself — who beheld the pantomime of binding this struggling Something — who beheld me almost sinking from physical exhaustion when my task of jailer was over — the confusion and terror that took possession of the bystanders, when they saw all this, was beyond description. The weaker ones fled from the apartment. The few who remained clustered near the door and could not be induced to approach Hammond and his Charge. Still incredulity broke out through their terror. They had not the courage to satisfy themselves, and yet they doubted. It was in vain that I begged of some of the men to come near and convince themselves by touch of the existence in that room of a living being which was invisible. They were incredulous, but did not dare to undeceive themselves. How could a solid, living, breathing body be invisible, they asked. My reply was this. I gave a sign to Hammond, and both of us — conquering our fearful repugnance to touch the invisible creature — lifted it from the ground, manacled as it was, and took it to my bed. Its weight was about that of a boy of fourteen.

"Now, my friends," I said, as Hammond and myself held the creature suspended over the bed, "I can give you self-evident proof that here is a solid, ponderable body, which, nevertheless, you cannot see. Be good enough to watch the surface of the bed attentively."

I was astonished at my own courage in treating this strange event so calmly; but I had recovered from my first terror, and felt a sort of scientific pride in the affair, which dominated every other feeling.

The eyes of the bystanders were immediately fixed on my bed. At a given signal Hammond and I let the creature fall. There was the dull sound of a heavy body alighting on a soft mass. The timbers of the bed creaked. A deep impression marked itself distinctly on the pillow, and on the bed itself. The crowd who witnessed this gave a low cry, and rushed from the room. Hammond and I were left alone with our Mystery.

We remained silent for some time, listening to the low irregular breathing of the creature on the bed and watching the rustle of the bedclothes as it impotently struggled to free itself from confinement. Then Hammond spoke. "Harry, this is awful."

"Ay, awful."

"But not unaccountable."

"Not unaccountable! What do you mean? Such a thing has never occurred since the birth of the world. I know not what to think, Hammond. God grant that I am not mad and that this is not an insane fantasy!"

"Let us reason a little, Harry. Here is a solid body which we touch but which we cannot see. The fact is so unusual that it strikes us with terror. Is there no parallel, though, for such a phenomenon? Take a piece of pure glass. It is tangible and transparent. A certain chemical coarseness is all that prevents its being so entirely transparent as to be totally invisible. It is not theoretically impossible, mind you, to make a glass which shall not reflect a single ray of light — a glass so pure and homogeneous in its atoms that the rays from the sun will pass through it as they do through the air, refracted but not reflected. We do not see the air, and yet we feel it."

"That's all very well, Hammond, but these are inanimate substances. Glass does not breathe, air does not breathe. This thing has a heart that palpitates — a will that moves it — lungs that play, and inspire and respire."

"You forget the phenomena of which we have so often heard of late," answered the doctor gravely. "At the meetings called 'spirit circles,' invisible hands have been thrust into the hands of those persons round the table — warm, fleshly hands that seemed to pulsate with mortal life."

"What? Do you think, then, that this thing is——"

"I don't know what it is," was the solemn reply; "but please the gods I will, with your assistance, thoroughly investigate it."

We watched together, smoking many pipes, all night long, by the bedside of the unearthly being that tossed and panted until it was apparently wearied out. Then we learned by the low, regular breathing that it slept. The next morning the house was all astir. The boarders congregated on the landing outside my room, and Hammond and myself were lions. We had to answer a thousand questions as to the state of our extraordinary prisoner, for as yet not one person in the house except ourselves could be induced to set foot in the apartment. The creature was awake. This was evidenced by the convulsive manner in which the bedclothes were moved in its efforts to escape. There was something truly terrible in beholding, as it were, those second-hand indications of the terrible writhings and agonized struggles for liberty which themselves were invisible. Hammond and myself had racked our brains during the long night to discover some means by which we might realize the shape and general appearance of the Enigma. As well as we could make out by passing our hands over the creature's form, its outlines and lineaments were human. There was a mouth; a round, smooth head without hair; a nose, which, however, was little elevated above the cheeks; and its hands and feet felt like those of a boy. At first we thought of placing the being on a smooth surface and tracing its outlines with chalk, as shoemakers trace the outline of the foot. This plan was given up as being of no value. Such an outline would give not the slightest idea of its conformation. A happy thought struck me. We would take a cast of it in plaster-of-Paris. This would give us the solid figure, and satisfy all our wishes. But how to do it. The movements of the creature would disturb the setting of the plastic covering, and distort the mould. Another thought. Why not give it chloroform?

It had respiratory organs — that was evident by its breathing. Once reduced to a state of insensibility, we could do with it what we would. Doctor X ——— was sent for; and after the worthy physician had recovered from the first shock of amazement, he proceeded to administer the chloroform. In three minutes afterward we were enabled to remove the fetters from the creature's body, and a modeller was busily engaged in covering the invisible form with the moist clay. In five minutes more we had a mould, and before evening a rough facsimile of the Mystery. It was shaped like a man — distorted, uncouth, and horrible, but still a man. It was small, not over four feet and some inches in height, and its limbs revealed a muscular development that was unparalleled. Its face surpassed in hideousness anything I had ever seen. Gustave Doré, or Callot, or Tony Johannot, never conceived anything so horrible. There is a face in one of the latter's illustrations to *Un Voyage où il vous plaira*, which somewhat approaches the countenance of this creature, but does not equal it. It was the physiognomy of what I should fancy a ghoul might be. It looked as if it was capable of feeding on human flesh. Having satisfied our curiosity, and bound every one in the house to secrecy, it became a question what was to be done with our Enigma? It was impossible that we should keep such a horror in our house; it was equally impossible that such an awful being should be let loose upon the world. I confess that I would have gladly voted for the creature's destruction. But who would shoulder the responsibility? Who would undertake the execution of this horrible semblance to a human being? Day after day this question was deliberated gravely. The boarders all left the house. Mrs. Moffat was in despair, and threatened Hammond and myself with all sorts of legal penalties if we did not remove the Horror. Our answer was, "We will go if you like, but we decline taking this creature with us. Remove it yourself if you please. It appeared in your house. On you the responsibility rests."

To this there was, of course, no answer. Mrs. Moffat could not obtain for love or money a person who would even approach the Mystery. At last it died. Hammond and I found it cold and stiff one morning in the bed. The heart had ceased to beat, the lungs to inspire. We hastened to bury it in the garden. It was a strange funeral, the dropping of that viewless corpse into the damp hole. The cast of its form I gave to Doctor X ———, who keeps it in his museum in Tenth Street. As I am on the eve of a long journey from which I may not return, I have drawn up this narrative of an event the most singular that has ever come to my knowledge.

THE ADVENTURE OF MY AUNT MARGARET

CHAPTER I.

AUNT MARGARET AT HOME.

MY Aunt Margaret was what is termed a clever woman — that is to say, she was keen and resolute, prompt and active, and difficult to overreach in matters of money or business. Of the former she was, people said, a little too fond. At all events she hated waste, and lived frugally on a dietary which leaned much upon tea and eggs, and sometimes omitted dinner altogether. But though light, her housekeeping was neither beggarly nor altogether uncomfortable.

Aunt Margaret, as I remember her — dear me, how many years ago! — was rather tall, if anything, and decidedly slim and erect, with a countenance which, though shrewd and energetic, had yet something kindly in it. Her features were small and nicely turned, and one could quite suppose that she might have been a pretty girl once on a time.

She held herself well, and stepped with a good, firm tread, and lightly withal. Hers was a rustic life, somewhat lonely, in a three-storied house, with three rooms on a floor, and a gable at front — steep-roofed and tiled, and with a great growth of jessamine and woodbine about the porch and the windows. Half a dozen tall, dark elms made a comfortable shadow about the house; and a white paling in front enclosed, by the roadside, the little flower garden, with an old mulberry tree in the centre.

In the rear was a lock-up yard with coachhouse and stable, and a comfortable room in which old Tom Clinton slept with a blunderbuss and back-sword in case of robbers. On week-days Aunt Margaret dressed very plainly — stuff in winter, cotton in summer; but on Sundays she went to church in thick old satins or ancient brocades, so stiff that the squire's lady across the aisle used to talk of them covetously for days after, and wonder why such things were not to be had now-a-days.

Aunt Margaret was always particularly neat. She used to carry her keys in an old-fashioned way, man a ribbon by her side, a neat little pincushion, her scissors, and I forget what else. It was the tradition of that chatelaine which I saw revived long after poor Aunt Margaret had gone to her rest. She had long and very pretty hands — her years considered; and, in fact, the only thing I remember decidedly against her was her enamelled box of rappee, and the habit to which it ministered.

Her prime-minister was Winnifred Dobbs — fattish, rosy, ancient Time *had* thinned her flowing hair, and bleached it somewhat; but she smiled largely, and was goodhumoured; although not very quick, was steady and sure, and chatted volubly, though not always much to the purpose; and Aunt Margaret gave her her tea in the drawingroom, which was an excuse for keeping her there for the rest of the evening; and so Aunt Margaret was not quite so lonely as she might have been.

There was a young and stumpy girl beside, who washed, and did nearly everything, and must have found these young days rather dull. To her the view of the road from the kitchen window was a resource, and the occasional calls of the baker, butcher, and dairyman were precious. She talked and laughed with herself; she sang a great deal in the scullery, and joked with the cat in the kitchen.

Among Aunt Margaret's sources of revenue was her moiety of what she called the Winderbrooke property. Everybody, of course, knows the old town of Winderbrooke. Three houses in the main street belonged to her and her sister. Of these, for convenience, they made a division, the best they could. Aunt Margaret had for her share a tobacconist and half a tailor. The latter was punctual; but the tobacconist owed a whole year's rent, and was already some way in his third half-year. His letters were highly unsatisfactory. The tailor's answers to her inquiries about his defaulting neighbour were reserved and evasive. But that Be had a wise terror of law and lawyers my Aunt would have retained an attorney forthwith.

"I'm not surprised, Winnie," said my Aunt, snuffing her candle, as she and her confidential handmaid sat by the fire, in her diminutive drawing room, at their tea; "not the least. Did you ever know one man tell of another when a woman was concerned? I John Pendle has been my tenant eleven years and knows all about that roguish snuff-man; but he won't tell me one iota about him. Not that Browning is anything on earth to him. I suppose he doesn't care if Browning was hanged; but simply Browning is a man, and *I a woman*. That's it, Winnie — that's *all* — *I'm* to be robbed and no one to prevent it. A conspiracy I call it. I tell you, Winnie, I never knew one man prevent another's robbing a woman, except when he hoped to rob her himself.

Honest Dobbs's fat face and round eyes looked distressed over her teacup at her mistress, while she discoursed; and she made answer only by that expressive but unspellable tick-tick-ticking made by the tip of the tongue at the back of the teeth.

"And rob me they would, Winnie, if I were half such a fool as you, for instance. But I'll show them there *are* women who do know something of business."

And she nodded mysteriously, but briskly, on her maid with a side-glance of her dark eye.

"I mean to start tomorrow morning, after breakfast, at eight o'clock. You come with me, Winnie, and we'll sleep tomorrow night at Winderbrooke, and *that*, I think, will surprise

CHAPTER II.

MY AUNT MARGARET ON THE ROAD.

OLD Tom Teukesbury, from the "Bull," was not at the little wicket of Aunt Margaret's habitation until sixteen minutes past nine.

As Tom drew up, driving a one-horse covered vehicle, the name and fashion of which have long passed away, my Aunt, fully equipped was standing on the step of her open door, with her watch in her right hand, the dial of which she presented grimly at Tom, perched in the distance on the box.

Tom's lean, mulberry-coloured face, sharp nose, and cold gray eyes winced not at the taunt "It's easy a showin' a watch. I'd like to know where the 'oss is to come from, if maister sends the grey to Huntley, and Jack can't go in harness noways; and here's the bay can't go neither without a brushing boot; and I'm to go down to Hoxton to borrow one of Squire; there's a raw there as big as my' hand — you don't want her to founder 'twixt this and Muckleston, I'm sure; and you wouldn't be so hard on the brute, to drive her without one — and that's why, ma'am."

Tom's way with women when he was late, was to complicate the case, with an issue on farriery, which soon shuts them up.

So Winnifred got in with a basket of edibles, and the carpet-bag on the seat beside my Aunt, who entered the vehicle severely.

It was a journey of nearly forty miles, by cross-roads, to Winderbrooke. All geographers well know the range of bills that lie between Hoxton and that town. The landscape is charming — the air invigorating. But the pull up the steep road that scales the side of the hill, is severe. The bay-mare showed signs of her soft feeding. She was hirsute, clumsy, and sudorous. She had a paunch, and now and then a cavernous cough.

The progress was, therefore, slow; and the ladies, every here and there, up particulars stiff bits, were obliged to get out and walk, which, although my Aunt might not mind it much, distressed good Winnifred Dobbs, who was in no condition for executing an excelsior movement on foot.

Near the summit of the hill the ladies waxed hungry; so, it was presumed, did the mare. The party halted; the nosebag was applied; the basket was opened: Tom had a couple of clumsy sandwiches; the ladies partook; and the bay mare enjoyed her repast with that pleasant crisp crunching, which agreeably suggests good grinders and a good grist. There was still a little pull before reaching the crown of the hill Winnifred could walk no more; but my Aunt trod nimbly up the ascent, and on reaching the summit, made a halt, and, like an invading general, viewed with an eye at once curious and commanding, the country that lay beneath.

She was looking for Winderbrooke close by the foot of the hill.

"Where's the town?" demanded my Aunt.

"Wat toon, ma'am?" inquired Tom. "Winderbrooke, to be sure."

"Well, Winderbrooke will be there." Tom was pistoling Winderbrooke with his whip.

"Where?"

"You see the steeple there?"

"Ay."

"Well, that isn't it."

"No?"

"Now, ye'll see a bit of a rock or a hillock atop o' that hill."

"That hill — well?"

"Now, follow that line on past that whitish thing ye see."

"You don't mean on that remote plain? Why, man, that's the horizon."

"Well, it's beyond that a little bit, over the rising ground that will be jest there; and folks say, on a clear day, you may see the smoke o' the toon over it, though I never did."

There was a pause, and my Aunt looked stem and black toward the remote objects which he indicated and neither could see, and then she looked back over her shoulder in the direction of home. I can't say what was passing in her mind; but she looked forward again, and with an angry side-glance at Tom, she said — Why, it's a *perfect journey!*" There was another pause, and she said with a dry abruptness, "Let me in, please;" and in the same defiant tone, "Go on!"

And she drew up the window with a sharp clang in Tom's face.

She sat stiff and silent, and sniffed as she looked sternly through the window, and answered Winnifred Dobbs, who was under the same comfortable delusion about the vicinity of Winderbrooke, sharply and suddenly, when she asked how far they still had to go, before reaching that resting place.

"Fifty miles, and another range of mountains."

CHAPTER III.

THE MOON RISES.

DOWN hill was pleasanter, and the bay mare did wonders, and my Aunt, who was not more unjust than the rest of her sex, soon forgave her companion, and talked affably enough with fat old Winnie Dobbs.

About two miles beyond the foot of the hill, in a pretty hollow, lies the pleasant little town of Dramworth, with old red brick gables and many tall poplars, where at the small inn, the party changed horses.

It was not far from three o'clock in the afternoon when they arrived there. One horse they found in the inn stable, but nothing less than a postchaise, and no driver on the premises, men and vehicles being away on other travels.

Tom being well known there, and fortunately being well esteemed, there was no great hesitation in trusting the horse in his hands. So the bay mare took her place in the stable, and the Dramworth steed was put to in her place. It was a long drive — three-and-twenty miles — still to Winderbrooke, and the horse and the roads indifferent. The season was pretty well on in the autumn, and the evenings were not so long as they had been at midsummer, and as it was some time past three when they started, Tom could not undertake to reach their destination before nightfall.

From Dram worth to Winderbrooke was by no means so familiar a route to Tom Teukesbury as the road they had travelled hitherto. He conferred, however, with mine host under the porch, and gathered in brief hints and notes, the landmarks of his journey, and resumed the whip and reins with a serious but tolerably confident countenance.

Tom being under promise to spare the horse, drove drowsily. It is a very pretty country, though but thinly inhabited. The sun was by this time at the verge of those low hills that lie to the westward. They had just crossed a narrow old bridge over a little stream, and there was an ascent at the other side, which their horse refused to mount until the ladies had descended. In fact he was an unsatisfactory brute and, Tom feared, had been out that morning.

My Aunt and Winnifred got down and trudged on, this time in front of the vehicle, which came tinkling up the slope, in the slanting light, with Tom at the horse's head. In this lonely region a solitary little boy came over a stile by the roadside, and looking back, Aunt Margaret saw Tom at a standstill, conversing with the urchin, and pointing in various directions in illustration of his discourse, or his questioning.

"Well, Tom, what does he say? How far is it to Winderbrooke?"

"He is a stoopid, that boy, and knows nout — no more than that post, ma'am — he doan't."

I think Tom was uneasy by this time, for he did not know the country. He was gaping about him vainly for a sight of a human being, and standing up in the "dickey" and beckoning with his whip whenever he fancied he saw one. But each in succession turned out to be a horse or a goat, or a post. Sometimes he got up a brisk trot, and sometimes subsided almost to a walk, as his doubts or his hopes prevailed. But though he affected in replying to my Aunt's queries through the front window, a confidence as to their whereabouts, and promised the early appearance of certain landmarks which he named, yet I think by this time honest Tom was strongly of opinion that he had lost his way.

By the time the sun went down they had got upon a wild moorland with patches of stunted old wood, and heathy undulations, and distant boundaries of low hills, crowned irregularly with trees.

"Get on a little faster, please; I don't like being out in the dark," urged my Aunt who, as a spinster, and in charge beside of Winnie Dobbs, felt her responsibilities duly.

Tom muttered to himself, and got into a trot which, however, soon abated. Twilight was deepening and a round harvest moon soon began to shine solemnly over the broad and solitary landscape.

"How many miles now, Tom?" asked my Aunt sharply from the window.

"It'll be about five from Winderbrooke, ma'am."

"And what's this place?"

"Well, it's the moor, I suppose."

"I'd like a glass of water. Is there a house near?"

"We'll be soon at the cross-mills — round that bit of a clump o' trees there."

But when they passed the dump there was neither river nor mills, and Tom stood up uneasily in the dickey, and made a dreary survey.

"Are we at the mills, Tom?"

"Not yet a bit, ma'am — I'm a looking if there's a house near."

But there was no friendly red twinkle from cottage window, and Tom, with his two maidens in charge, was growing very uncomfortable.

CHAPTER IV.

PERTURBATION.

They drove very slowly. Tom was groping in a geographical chaos, and paused every now and then. My Aunt inquired angrily, demanding the production of the cross-mills. Tom asked ten minutes, and half a mile more, and promised the *profert*; but after half an hour's driving, with no result, my Aunt grew extremely frightened and exasperated, and Tom sulkily admitted that he had his doubts as to their topographical position.

Tom halted, and stood up in the dickey, as before. My Aunt Margaret descended, and looking at the moonlit prospect from the bank by the roadside, harangued the troubled driver in strong and shrill language; and Winnie, whose grief was more sedentary, sat in the vehicle, and spoke not but stared through the window, with a fat and fatigued sadness, in vague apprehension.

There were plenty of old stories of highwaymen afloat through their scared fancies; and here was a lonely heath — two helpless maidens also, with a trunk, a basket of "prog," and four pounds seven and sixpence in a purse, and a driver without small or back-sword, and no pistols!

"We'll, sure get on the London road in two miles more or less, and then we're all right," said Tom.

"London, fiddle! It's my belief, Thomas Teukesbury, you nave not the faintest idea where we are; you haven't, sir, no more than myself."

"There isn't a light nor a house.

D — n the place!" retorted Tom, bitterly.

"Don't curse — we're bad enough. No impiety, please. *You* should command yourself, I think, if I do, while we are in this helpless and utterly unprotected situation."

"There's a man coming," said Tom, hopefully.

Good gracious!" cried my Aunt "No, there ain't," said Tom, dejectedly.

"Heaven be praised!" said my Aunt, with a gasp. "I look on it sir, we're in danger here on this dreadful moor, to which *you*, sir, have brought us. What a shame, Thomas, to pretend you knew the way! Winnie, Winnie Dobbs, we're *lost* — lost on a heath! Tom has lost us!"

Winnie's fat, forlorn face filled the back window of the vehicle.

"Lost on a heath, Winnie, in the middle of the night!"

"What'll we best do ma'am?" imploringly asked Winnie, who was accustomed to derive her stock of wisdom in all emergencies from my Aunt Margaret's inspiration.

"Ask Thomas Teukesbury up there — he's our guide. He brought us here, though he does not seem to know a way out Ask him. I don't know, no more than the man in the moon there."

"I dessay we're all right enough, after all," said Tom, "only I don't know it by this light Will you get in, ma'am, and well git on a bit, and we'll, sure, light on a hinn or a public afore long."

Well, she did get in. The horse was unmistakably fatigued, with a disposition to draw up every now and then, by an old tree, or under a steep bank, or sometimes without any special landmark to invite.

Tom got down, and walked by the brute's adjected head; and my Aunt, who had given up the sarcastic and ironical mood as her alarms deepened, scolded him occasionally from the front window. As the back of his head and shoulders were presented, Tom walked on, not caring to turn about to reply, but, I am afraid, making some disrespectful remarks in the dark.

In fact, the poor horse, who, if he had but understood and spoken our language, could, probably, have saved them and himself a world of trouble, was so evidently done up that Tom insisted he must have his oats, and accordingly, he partook of that refreshment in a nosebag. Here was another delay. My Aunt's watch had been frequently consulted, by the moonlight, during that anxious journey. It was now out again. The night was a little sharp, too; and the whole party, who had made no provision for such a climate and such hours, were rather cold. You may be sure my Aunt's temper was not growing more agreeable.

There was just the alternative of a bivouac where they stood, or following, on chance, the road they had been pursuing. My Aunt adopted the latter. Affairs had grown so serious that she now never removed her face from the little front window, through which she looked ahead, with hope deferred, and a sick heart.

She had been so often deceived by marly banks and thickets, that it was not until they had almost reached it, to her inexpressible relief, she plainly saw the whitewashed front of a low, two-storied public, standing back from the road a few yards, and snugly sheltered among some thick and stunted trees.

My Aunt held the reins through the window, and Tom got down and summoned mine host A red streak of candlelight shot out through the door of the pot-house, and there was a parley which she could not hear.

CHAPTER V.

“THE GOOD WOMAN.”

Tom returned slowly. My Aunt's heart sank.

“Well?”

“Only two rooms, ma'am, and lofts above, and the house full o' tipsy colliers, dancing. But there's an inn, called “The Good Woman,” only half a mile on, and lots o' room.”

My Aunt breathed a sigh of relief, and was silently thankful. Then she repeated the news to Winnie, who joined in the jubilation.

About ten minutes more brought them, after a slight ascent, on a sudden, to a hollow, expanding to an amphitheatrical plain, encompassed by wooded, rising grounds, and near the centre of which rose two abrupt and oddly-shaped hillocks, like islands from a lake, and a very large pond from under a thick screen of trees, and the clustered gables and chimneys of “The Good Woman” shone mistily in the moonlight. They drew up before the door of the inn. Old-fashioned and weather-stained it looked in the faint beams. The door was closed — it was past ten o'clock — but a glimmer of candle or firelight shone through the shutter chink at the right. My Aunt did not wait. There was no need to hold the reins of the timid horse, who coughed, snorted, and shook himself, with his nose near the ground.

My Aunt Margaret ran up the three broad steps, the dingy “Good Woman,” without a head, sarcastically swinging between the sign-posts at her left. With the carpet-bag in one hand, she hammered lustily at the knocker with the other. Tom, a little in the rear, with one foot on the steps, rested the trunk on his knee; and Winnie, with the basket of “prog” on her arm, stood dejectedly beside him.

There was some delay about opening the door, and when it was done, it was with a chain across, and a woman, with a coarse voice, and strong Irish accent, asked, not pleasantly, who was there.

“Travellers,” said my Aunt, “who have been led astray by the driver.”

“Where are yez from?”

“From Dramworth to Winderbrooke.”

“From Dhramworth to Windherbrooke! an' he dhruv yez here! How many iv yez is in it?”

“Two ladies, a horse, a vehicle, and the driver.” Tom, the culprit, was degraded, and my Aunt placed him after the vehicle.

The maid of the inn, with high-cheek bones, and a determined countenance, was looking over the chain.

“Did yez come through the village, or over the moor?”

“Over the moor, I suppose; from that direction,” answered my Aunt. “And why didn't yez stop at “The Cat and Fiddle?”

“You mean the small ale-house near this. It was full of inebriated men,” answered Aunt Margaret, with dignity.

Well, *you* may come in, ma'am, and the leedy that's widge ye; but we can't *Accommodate* yer man, and he must only take the horse an' carriage back to “The Cat an' Fiddle,” an' if that'll answer, yez may come in; if not, yez must all go on, for we won't let a man in after ten o'clock.”

My Aunt expostulated, but the portress was inexorable.

“We won't let a *man* in after ten o'clock for Saint Payther, and that's the holy all iv it,” she answered, firmly.

So, my Aunt submitted, and softening at the parting, gave Tom some shillings on account, and wished him goodnight; and when he had got upon the box, and started afresh for “The Cat and Fiddle,” and had made some way in his return, the door was shut in the faces of the spinsters, who stood, with their modest luggage, upon the steps, in the moonlight. The chain was withdrawn, and the hall of “The Good Woman” stood open to receive them.

I don't know whether my Aunt had read “Ferdinand Count Fathom,” or ever seen the “Bleeding Nun” performed on any stage; but if she had I venture to say she was reminded of both before morning.

The woman with high-cheek bones, and somewhat forbidding face, stood before them on their entrance, with a brass candlestick raised in her hand, so that the light fell from above her head on the faces of the guests. She had allowed them without a helping hand to pull in their luggage, and was now maxing a steady and somewhat scowling scrutiny of my Aunt and Winnie.

“And yez come from Windberbrooke?” she said, after an interval, with a jealous glance still upon them.

My Aunt nodded.

“Yer mighty tall, the two o' yez, I'm thinkin (another pause.) “Will I help yez off widge yer cloaks?”

My Aunt would have probably been tart enough upon this uncivil damsel, had it not been that her attention was a little called off! by the sound of female lamentation indistinctly audible from a chamber near the hall.

She proceeded to remove their mantles, eyeing them, at the same time, with a surly sort of curiosity.

“We are cold, my good woman; we can sit for a while by the kitchen fire,” said my Aunt, recollecting herself.

“The kitchen's all through other wid the sudd that's tumbled down the chimbley; bud I'll light yez a bit o' fire in a brace o' shakes in your bedroom. Is it dinner yez'll be wanting?”

“Tea, please,” said my Aunt, “and Lend a hand i' ye plase, Missess, wid them things,” said she to Winnie, whom, with the quick instinct of her kind, she discovered to be the subordinate.

CHAPTER VI.

THE WHITE CHAMBER.

A FAT slatternly woman, by no means young, with a face swollen and red with weeping, pushed open a side door, and standing behind the portress, gaped on them, and asked—“Is it them, Nell?”

“Arra, ma’am, can’t ye keep quite. No it isn’t no one, but here’s two leedies ye see, that wants a bed an’ a fire, and a cup o’ tay in the white room. Come along i’ ye plase, my leedy.”

And in an’ aside, as she passed, my Aunt heard her say, close in the blubbered face of the fat woman—“Arrah, ma’am, dear, will ye get in out o’ that, an’ shut the doore.

The stout woman complied; and as they mounted the broad stairs, they again heard the sounds of crying.

This certainly savoured in no wise of the warm welcome for which inns are famous. The mansion, too, old wainscoted, and palpably altogether too large for its business. They met Boots coming down the stairs with a dingy kitchen candle and a hammer in his hand; a pallid fellow, with the sort of inquiring hang-dog look that seemed to belong to the staff of “The Good Woman.” He stood close by the wall in the corner of the lobby as they passed by, and did not offer to carry up the trunk.

“Bring a guvvaul o’ wudd, will ye. Barney, jewel, to the white room?” said the handmaid over her shoulder.

My Aunt and Winnie followed her to the head of the stairs, where she placed the trunk, and this slight circumstance I mention, because it was immediately connected with my Aunt’s adventure, and she took a coalscuttle instead, and conducting by two turns into a long wainscoted gallery, she opened a door on the right, and they entered a large square room, with a recess near one angle, two tall narrow windows, with white curtains rather yellow, and one very capacious bed, with curtains of the same. There was a skimpy bit of carpet near the hearth, and very scant and plain furniture.

The wood having arrived, Nell made a good fire, placed the deal table and two chairs near it, lighted a large mould of four to the pound, such as Molly Dumpling sported on the night of her dreadful adventure with William Gardner, and altogether the room began to put on its cheeriest looks. And when the teathings, eggs, and battered toast arrived, my Aunt and Winnie being well warmed by this time, sat down with their feet on the fender, the one mollified and the other consoled.

After tea, my Aunt, who was a fidgety person, made a tour of the room, and a scrutiny of the open cupboard and drawers, but she found nothing, except an old black glove for the left hand, in one of the drawers.

When this was over she sat by the fire again, and speculated for Winnie’s instruction upon their geographical probabilities. But Winnie was growing sleepy.

“A double-bedded room would have been more *comme il faut*; but it is plainly a poor place, and after all the bed is unusually large,” thought my Aunt.

And so, indeed, it was, extraordinarily large, and of an oldfashioned construction.

My Aunt, who was of an active inquiring genius, opened a bit of one of the shutters and peeped out. It showed a view of the inn yard. The side next her had been formed by a wing of the house; but that now stood up a gaunt roofless wall, with the broad moon shining through its sashless windows. On the left was a row of tall and dingy stables and offices, and opposite, another ruined building, a shed, and a tall arched gate. The pavement was grass-grown and rutty, and the whole thing looked awfully seedy, and not the less gloomy for some great trees that darkly overhung the buildings from the outside.

Having made her survey, my Aunt would have closed the shutter, but that she saw a man walk lazily from the side beneath her, his hands in his pockets, across the yard, casting an undulating and misshapen shadow over the uneven pavement.

When he reached the gate at the other side, he took a key from his pocket, and unlocked a wicket in it, and setting his foot on the plank beneath, leaned his elbow on the side, and lazily looked out, as if on the watch for somebody. A huge dog came pattering out of a kennel in the shadow, and placing his great head by the man’s leg, sniffed gloomily into the darkness.

“Are ye expectin’ any friends, ma’am?” asked Nell’s coarse voice over my Aunt’s shoulder, so sharply and suddenly that the start brought the blood to her thin cheeks.

“Not very likely to see friends here,” replied my Aunt, Very tartly. “What do you mean, woman, by talking that way over my shoulder?”

The grim chambermaid by this time had seen the man, and was eyeing him under her projecting and somewhat shrewish brows.

“An’ ye come from Hoxton?” she said rather slowly and sharply.

“I told you so, woman.”

“It wasn’t from Westerton, ye’re sure?”

“I’ve told you where we came from, though it is no business of yours. I never heard of Westerton.”

My Aunt added this a little emphatically, owing to an undefined feeling that a suspicion of having come from Westerton was likely in some mysterious way to prejudice her.

The maid replied nothing, but said a little gruffly, “By your lave, ma’am and pushing by her, she closed the shutters, and drew a great wooden sliding bolt across with a jerk.

My Aunt was so taken by surprise that she lost her time for retorting with effect, as she would have done, but she was so incensed, that from the fireplace she could not forbear saying, “I think you a most impertinent woman.”

To which the maid made no reply, but turned down the bedclothes, and arranged the curtains; and gathering together the tea equipage, carried the tray away, shutting the door.

CHAPTER VII.

AN ACCIDENT BEFALLS THE CANDLE.

MY Aunt Margaret stood for a while with her back to the fire, very erect, and her nose in air, sniffing defiantly toward the door through which that "most impertinent woman" had disappeared. Winnie was nodding profoundly in her chair by the fire. My Aunt with a toss of her head walked off again to the window, jerked back the bolt, and looked once more into the stableyard.

She saw Nell at the wicket-door, the man who had taken his stand there with the dog. Nell seemed to prevail with him, for he whistled back the dog, who had gone out, and locking the door again, he returned across the yard with Nell, who continued talking volubly as they walked side by side, and pointed up at my Aunt's window. On seeing the shutter again open and my Aunt's head and shoulders revealed against the light, both maid and man stopped in amaze, and silently gazed at her for some moments. I dare say, as my Aunt observed the evident impression produced upon those mysterious persons, she regretted inwardly the act of defiance which had removed the bolt and replaced her at the window. The woman walked into the house without speaking; the man called the dog, and strolled away towards the stable.

My Aunt closed the shutter, drew the bolt, and coming again to the fire, shook Winnie up from her sleep, and ordered her to say her prayers and get to bed.

These orders were soon complied with, and honest Winnie slept the sleep of a good conscience and a good digestion, sweetened by fatigue, while her mistress, who was cursed with an active mind, sat by the fire, with a well-snuffed candle, and conned over her correspondence and her figures, and prepared for the critical interview with the defaulting tobacconist next day. Then she fell into a reverie with her foot on the fender. I don't think she dozed; but the fire grew low, and the snuff of the candle waxed long and heavy at top like a fungus, and the room was tenebrose and silent, as indeed was the house, for by this time it was very late.

After a while, my Aunt fancied she heard some one approaching her chamber door very softly. It was the stealthy creaking of the boards that warned her; she could not hear the tread of the foot. She held her breath, sitting straight upon her chair, and gazing at the door with such faint light as her unsnuffed taper afforded her; and I dare say she looked extremely frightened.

She heard some one breathing close outside the door, then a hand softly laid on the door-handle; the door gently opened, and the face of the woman of the high cheek bones, pale and lowering, looked in. Her ill-omened stare encountered my Aunt's gaze, and each was perhaps unpleasantly surprised.

Both looked on, pale enough, for some time without speaking. At last my Aunt stood up and said sharply— "What's your business here, pray?"

"'Tis late to be burnin' candle and fire, missess — halfpast twelve, no less," said the maid with cool asperity. "We're an airy house, ma'am, here, and keeps dacent hours. Mebbe it's what ye'd like supper — there's cowl'd corn-beef and bacon," she added after a pause.

"Not any, thanks; had I wished rapper, I would have rung for it," said Aunt Margaret, loftily.

"Thru for you, missess, only there's no bell," answered the woman, coolly.

"More shame for you," retorted my Aunt, with a little flush, glancing along the walls innocent of bell-rope, for this "most impertinent woman" made her feel a little small.

"I seen you lookin' out again, ma'am, through the windy, I don't know after who."

The *aplomb* of this woman's attacks deprived my Aunt of breath and presence of mind, and she was amazed afterwards at the perplexed sort of patience with which she submitted to her impertinence.

"Yes: I looked out of the window."

"We would not like people stoppin' here that had friends outside," said the woman, with a searching glance and a sulky wag of her head.

"I don't know what you mean, woman."

"Oh, ho! thankee — I know very well what I mane — an' raebbe you're not quite sich a fool yourself but what you can make a guess. At any rate it is not a lady's part to be fur retin' about the room, an pimpin' an' spyin', ma'am."

"Leave the room, please," exclaimed my Aunt.

"An' mebbe signin' and beckonin' out o' the windies be night. Oh, ho! thankee — I know well enough what belongs to a lady."

"I repeat, woman, you had better leave the room."

"*Woman*, yourself! — I'm not goin' to be woman'd be you — an' the big lump iv a woman ye brought widge ye. Who's that? eh?"

"My housekeeper," replied my Aunt, with a fierce dignity.

"An' a strappin' ould one she is," retorted the woman, with a hoarse sneer. She was turning over Winnie's clothes, which lay on a chair.

"Your conduct is intolerable. I shall see the proprietor in the morning."

"An' welcomel!" said the woman, coolly. "You closed the shutters again, I suppose?" and she walked round the bed to the window, from which my Aunt had made her observations.

I do believe that, if she was enraged, Aunt Margaret was also the least bit in the world cowed by this woman. But observing a little trembling in the bed-curtains, to the far side of which her ugly visitor had passed, my Aunt made a quick step to the side of the bed next her, and drawing the curtain, saw this unpleasant woman at the opposite side with the bedclothes raised in her hand from Winnie's feet and ankles, which she was inspecting.

"Big feet!" Where's her boots, ma'am?" said the maid across the bed, eyeing my Aunt aslant, and replacing the bedclothes.

“Boots or shoes, on the floor by the fire, and I wish you’d begone.”

“I’ll take your own, too, ma’am,” answered she.

“Well, yes; that is, I’ll leave them outside the door.”

“As ye please: only get to yer bed, at worst — it’s all hours,” and without more preparation, she chucked my Aunt’s mould candle from its socket into the fire, where, lying on its side it blazed up merrily.

“What do you mean? How dare you, huzzy! Fetch a candle this moment.”

“Arra go to yer bed, woman, while ye have light, will ye?” and with these words the attendant withdrew, shutting the door with a clap.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF A FIGURE SEEN BY MY AUNT.

MY Aunt opened the door, very angry. She was about to walk down stairs to insist on trying the delinquent by court-martial before the "Proprietor;" but she recollected that he was probably in his bed and asleep by this time. She contented herself, therefore, by calling after her.

"Rely on it, I'll complain in the morning — so sure as I live."

And so she shut the door, and the candle making a glorious blaze in the grate my Aunt thought the chambermaid's advice worth following, and did get into her bed while there was light I dare say her collision with the chambermaid cost her more than twenty minutes' sleep. When her anger subsided there remained a different sort of uneasiness, for there was something ill-omened and menacing in the unintelligible ways of this inn and its people. My Aunt Margaret, however, was really tired, and eventually fell into a slumber, deep and dreamless, from which she awakened with a start.

She fancied that she had been disturbed by a sound as of some heavy weight pulled along the floor close to the room in which she slept. The sound had ceased before she was fully awake; but it left her with a most disagreeable sensation of fear and uncertainty, for, undefinably, it was connected in her mind with the idea of mischief designed to herself.

All of a sudden she remembered her trunk, left at the head of the staircase, and the idea rushed upon her, "They are stealing my trunk!" The sound resembled the rumble of it along the floor.

My Aunt had a keen sense of property, and was not wanting in pluck. She jumped out of bed, opened her door softly, and listened. But everything was perfectly quiet "It was in order to confine me to my room that that odious woman deprived me of my candle," thought my Aunt, although even if she had had it at her bedside she could not have lighted it, for the fire had gone quite out. She listened, but there was nothing stirring; and, in extreme *déshabille*, as she was, my Aunt, full of anxieties, crept out on the lobby, and made her way through the passages to the stairhead.

There stood the old hair trunk on its end, with its rows of dim brass nails, plain enough in the faint light from the lobby window. My Aunt was relieved. She would have been very glad to pull it into her room; but the distance was considerable, and the noise would have brought the people about her, and she was in no state to receive company.

Having stood affectionately and anxiously by the friendly trunk for a minute or two, irresolute, she began to find it too cold to stay longer; so, with an easier mind, she groped her way back again.

It was easier to find the lobby than to discover in the dark her own bedroom door. She groped along the passages; she had counted the steps, but now was not quite sure whether it was thirty-five, or *forty-five*; she stopped now and then to listen in her groping return, and began to grow rather confused; and wished, as active-minded persons not unfrequently do, that she had remained quietly as she was.

In fact, she was precisely in the situation to lose her way, and step into a wrong bedroom, and was extremely uncomfortable in mind and cold in body; and very nervous beside, lest any one should chance to come that way with a candle, and discover the nakedness of the land.

In this state my Aunt's deliberations were of the very fussiest sort, and her exertions great; but I doubt if she could have recovered her room, at least at the first venture, without light. Light, however, did come, and this was the manner of its arrival. On a sudden a door opened below stairs — near the foot of the staircase it must have been, she heard so clearly; and voices, before inaudible, now reached her ear.

A female was weeping loudly, and uttering broken sentences through her sobs.

"They've killed him — he's murdered — they've murdered him!" and similar ejaculations came rapidly tumbling one over the other in her ululation.

"Arra, ma'am, go back again, and stay where ye wor. We'll be even wid them yet, for it is murder, the villians!" said a voice, which my Aunt had no difficulty in recognising as that of the Irish chambermaid. "Bud don't be rousin' the people — it must be done quiet."

There was more sobbing, and more talk, and the weeping female gave way, and was again shut into her room, and a gleam of an approaching candle sent an angular shadow on the ceiling at the end of the passage in which my Aunt stood. Extremely frightened, she crouched down close to the ground, and the forbidding-looking woman, with the high cheek bones, walked stealthily in from the stairhead passage, and stood, as pale as death, with her shoes off, and a candle in her hand, listening, as it seemed, at the far end of the gallery. She looked over her shoulder, and said, in a hard whisper —

"Stop there, wid their heavy shoes." She had a hammer in her hand, and looked unspeakably repulsive in her pallor. She lifted the candle above her head and listened. My Aunt was staring full at her from her place of semi-concealment, in a recess of one of the doors, with her face close to the ground.

If the woman saw her, she had presence of mind to make no sign; but with the hand in which the hammer was, she drew her dress up a little to enable her to step more freely, and, with a light, soft tread, passed across the entrance of the gallery.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FUNERAL VISITATION.

MY Aunt was impressed with the most dismal and terrific ideas of what was going forward. She was quite unnerved. She saw, sometimes the shadow of this woman, and sometimes the full light of the candle, still thrown upon the floor and walls at the end of the lobby, and dared not move.

Quickly the woman returned. She had now the hammer under the arm which bore the candlestick, and whispered —
“Barney!”

Then she raised in her other hand a long, rather slender, steel blade, as it appeared to my aunt, quite straight, and whispered —

“That’s the thing — betther nor the hammer; there’s no one awake but herself — for the life o’ ye, make no noise.”

She was crossing the far end of the passage as she said this, and she and the light of her candle quickly disappeared.

The last gleam threw the shadow of a pair of shoes from outside a bedroom door, along the floor, towards my Aunt. The door was next that in which she was crouched, and was a little open. She was now sure that she had discovered her room.

The moment the light had quite disappeared, she entered, and shut the door softly, and groped her way to the bed, and got in at her own side; and, being very cold, lay close to her companion for warmth. My Aunt envied Winnie her sound sleep. She vainly tried to compose herself, wildly conjecturing about unknown horrors, and longing for morning, and an escape from this suspected and mysterious house.

She was miserably cold, too. The night was sharp, and the fire long out. The bedclothes were insufficient, and Winnie also as cold as stone.

My Aunt had been in this state-freezing and listening, and awfully frightened for some ten minutes, perhaps, when she distinctly heard breathing near her door, and the muffled tread of shoeless feet, and then a whispering.

The door opened, and two men came in, carrying a coffin, on the lid of which a kitchen candle was burning dimly; and the ugly woman, Nell, between whom and my Aunt there had grown up, so fast, an unaccountable antipathy, followed, carrying in her hand the steel instrument which Aunt Margaret had observed before with so unpleasant a suspicion, and which was, in fact, a turnscrew.

The whole of this funereal pageant of a dream. The men paused for a moment, while the woman placed the candle on a chest of drawers, and slid the coffin-lid off, leaning it against the wall. They drew near; and as they laid their awful burthen lengthways on the bed by her side, one of the two men said —

“I’ll go to the feet, and do you go to the head.”

Upon this my Aunt, almost beside herself with terror, bounced up in the bed; and, instead of despatching her as she had expected, with a horrid roar and a screech, the men and woman fled from the room, and along the passage, leaving the coffin on the bed beside her.

“Winnie, Winnie — what is it?” cried my Aunt. But no Winnie was there. In her stead lay a dead man, with a white-fringed cap on, and a black, stubbed beard, the growth of some three or four days, and a little line of the white of one eye shining between its half-closed lids.

It was now; my Aunt’s turn, and with a loud yell, and overturning the coffin, she jumped out of the bed, and ran screaming along the gallery, where she fell, and fainted on the floor.

When she came to herself, she was in her own room and bed once more, with Winnie beside her: and she exclaimed, so soon as recollection quite returned —

“Oh, save me, Winnie, save me.”

“You’re quite safe, ma’am, dear.”

“Where are we?”

“In the inn, ma’am.”

“Bolt the door, Winnie; bolt the door, and lock it — they’re all murderers.”

“Drink some water, ma’am.”

“Lock the door, you fool! We shall be murdered.”

“The maid was here, ma’am, very sorry you were so frightened; but you went into the wrong room, and they could not help it.”

CHAPTER X.

HOW IT ALL HAPPENED.

GRADUALLY the facts came to light, though not fully for a long time afterward.

"The Good Woman" was one of those inns pleasantly known to our great-grandfathers. The old London road had run by its steps; and the wheels of old stagecoaches, postchaises, and waggons, had dustied its windows once. But unluckily for "The Good Woman, she stood upon the apex of a curve of that great channel of traffic which modern reform and a county presentment cut off; and the London road, henceforward running in a straight line from Diddleston to Huxbridge — fifteen miles — leaves "The Good Woman" full three miles on one side.

With the opening of the new line, and the "Crottworthy Arms," the halcyon days of the old inn ended. Its gabled frontage, steep roofs, and capacious premises — a world too wide for its shrunk business — fell gradually to decay. The old proprietor retired to his farm in Cheshire; and his nephew succeeded, got desperately into debt, was sued in all directions, and judgments wielded by exasperated creditors glimmered terribly through the storm, threatening to dash him to pieces. At this crisis, the ill-starred innkeeper, having ventured by night to Maryston — all his excursions of late had been in the dark — took cold, and died of a catarrh in three days.

The inn, nearly reduced to a state of siege; the innkeeper himself having long been an invisible and intangible substance, hid away from warrants, arrests, and other personal dangers, among the dilapidated lumber rooms and garrets of the old house; the people thinking more of a moonlit flitting than of improving the traffic of the forlorn "Good Woman when the proprietor died, that procedure upon his part was kept as secret as every other of late had been, and not altogether without cause, for there were those among his incensed creditors who were by no means incapable of the legal barbarity of arresting his corpse.

Thus came the mystery and suspicion with which my Aunt and Winnie were received — the coffin being expected hourly, and a grave opened, in the dark, in the neighbouring churchyard. The Irish maid, whose head was full of the disguises and stratagems of which she had heard so much in her own ingenious and turbulent country, was for a while, disposed to think that the unseasonable visitors were myrmidons of the law in disguise. The fat, dowdy woman, who emerged, with blubbered cheeks, when they entered, and whose lamentations subsequently my Aunt heard when she visited her trunk on the stairhead, was the widow of the departed proprietor.

The rest, I think, explains itself; and the reader will be, no doubt glad to learn that my Aunt's visit to Winderbrooke was, on the whole, satisfactory, and that she lived for many years to recount, by the fireside, to hushed listeners, this "winter's tale" of her adventures in "The Good Woman."

THE END

THE DEAD SEXTON

The sunsets were red, the nights were long, and the weather pleasantly frosty; and Christmas, the glorious herald of the New Year, was at hand, when an event — still recounted by winter firesides, with a horror made delightful by the mellowing influence of years — occurred in the beautiful little town of Golden Friars, and signalized, as the scene of its catastrophe, the old inn known throughout a wide region of the Northumbrian counties as the George and Dragon.

Toby Crooke, the sexton, was lying dead in the old coachhouse in the inn yard. The body had been discovered, only half an hour before this story begins, under strange circumstances, and in a place where it might have lain the better part of a week undisturbed; and a dreadful suspicion astounded the village of Golden Friars.

A wintry sunset was glaring through a gorge of the western mountains, turning into fire the twigs of the leafless elms, and all the tiny blades of grass on the green by which the quaint little town is surrounded. It is built of light, grey stone, with steep gables and slender chimneys rising with airy lightness from the level sward by the margin of the beautiful lake, and backed by the grand amphitheatre of the fells at the other side, whose snowy peaks show faintly against the sky, tinged with the vaporous red of the western light. As you descend towards the margin of the lake, and see Golden Friars, its taper chimneys and slender gables, its curious old inn and gorgeous sign, and over all the graceful tower and spire of the ancient church, at this hour or by moonlight, in the solemn grandeur and stillness of the natural scenery that surrounds it, it stands before you like a fairy town.

Toby Crooke, the lank sexton, now fifty or upwards, had passed an hour or two with some village cronies, over a solemn pot of purl, in the kitchen of that cosy hostelry, the night before. He generally turned in there at about seven o'clock, and heard the news. This contented him: for he talked little, and looked always surly.

Many things are now raked up and talked over about him.

In early youth, he had been a bit of a scamp. He broke his indentures, and ran away from his master, the tanner of Bryemere; he had got into fifty bad scrapes and out again; and, just as the little world of Golden Friars had come to the conclusion that it would be well for all parties — except, perhaps, himself — and a happy riddance for his afflicted mother, if he were sunk, with a gross of quart pots about his neck, in the bottom of the lake in which the grey gables, the elms, and the towering fells of Golden Friars are mirrored, he suddenly returned, a reformed man at the ripe age of forty.

For twelve years he had disappeared, and no one knew what had become of him. Then, suddenly, as I say, he reappeared at Golden Friars — a very black and silent man, sedate and orderly. His mother was dead and buried; but the “prodigal son” was received goodnaturedly. The good vicar, Doctor Jenner, reported to his wife:

“His hard heart has been softened, dear Dolly. I saw him dry his eyes, poor fellow, at the sermon yesterday.”

“I don’t wonder, Hugh darling. I know the part— ‘There is joy in Heaven.’ I am sure it was — wasn’t it? It was quite beautiful. I almost cried myself.”

The Vicar laughed gently, and stooped over her chair and kissed her, and patted her cheek fondly.

“You think too well of your old man’s sermons,” he said. “I preach, you see, Dolly, very much to the *poor*. If *they* understand me, I am pretty sure everyone else must; and I think that my simple style goes more home to both feelings and conscience—”

“You ought to have told me of his crying before. You *are* so eloquent,” exclaimed Dolly Jenner. “No one preaches like my man. I have never heard such sermons.”

Not many, we may be sure; for the good lady had not heard more than six from any other divine for the last twenty years.

The personages of Golden Friars talked Toby Crooke over on his return. Doctor Lincote said:

“He must have led a hard life; he had *dried in* so, and got a good deal of hard muscle; and he rather fancied he had been soldiering — he stood like a soldier; and the mark over his right eye looked like a gunshot.”

People might wonder how he could have survived a gunshot over the eye; but was not Lincote a doctor — and an army doctor to boot — when he was young; and who, in Golden Friars, could dispute with him on points of surgery? And I believe the truth is, that this mark had been really made by a pistol bullet.

Mr. Jarlcot, the attorney, would “go bail” he had picked up some sense in his travels; and honest Turnbull, the host of the George and Dragon, said heartily:

“We must look out something for him to put his hand to. *Now’s* the time to make a man of him.”

The end of it was that he became, among other things, the sexton of Golden Friars.

He was a punctual sexton. He meddled with no other person’s business; but he was a silent man, and by no means popular. He was reserved in company; and he used to walk alone by the shore of the lake, while other fellows played at fives or skittles; and when he visited the kitchen of the George, he had his liquor to himself, and in the midst of the general talk was a saturnine listener. There was something sinister in this man’s face; and when things went wrong with him, he could look dangerous enough.

There were whispered stories in Golden Friars about Toby Crooke. Nobody could say how they got there. Nothing is more mysterious than the spread of rumour. It is like a vial poured on the air. It travels, like an epidemic, on the sightless currents of the atmosphere, or by the laws of a telluric influence equally intangible. These stories treated, though darkly, of the long period of his absence from his native village; but they took no well-defined shape, and no one could refer them to any authentic source.

The Vicar’s charity was of the kind that thinketh no evil; and in such cases he always insisted on proof. Crooke was, of course, undisturbed in his office.

On the evening before the tragedy came to light — trifles are always remembered after the catastrophe — a boy, returning along the margin of the mere, passed him by seated on a prostrate trunk of a tree, under the “bield” of a rock, counting silver money. His lean body and limbs were bent together, his knees were up to his chin, and his long fingers were telling the coins over hurriedly in the hollow of his other hand. He glanced at the boy, as the old English saying is, like “the devil looking over

Lincoln." But a black and sour look from Mr. Crooke, who never had a smile for a child nor a greeting for a wayfarer, was nothing strange.

Toby Crooke lived in the grey stone house, cold and narrow, that stands near the church porch, with the window of its staircase looking out into the churchyard, where so much of his labour, for many a day, had been expended. The greater part of this house was untenanted.

The old woman who was in charge of it slept in a settlebed, among broken stools, old sacks, rotten chests and other rattletaps, in the small room at the rear of the house, floored with tiles.

At what time of the night she could not tell, she awoke, and saw a man, with his hat on, in her room. He had a candle in his hand, which he shaded with his coat from her eye; his back was towards her, and he was rummaging in the drawer in which she usually kept her money.

Having got her quarter's pension of two pounds that day, however, she had placed it, folded in a rag, in the corner of her tea caddy, and locked it up in the "eat-malison" or cupboard.

She was frightened when she saw the figure in her room, and she could not tell whether her visitor might not have made his entrance from the contiguous churchyard. So, sitting bolt upright in her bed, her grey hair almost lifting her kerchief off her head, and all over in "a fit o' t' creepins," as she expressed it, she demanded:

"In God's name, what want ye thar?"

"Whar's the peppermint ye used to hev by ye, woman? I'm bad wi' an inward pain."

"It's all gane a month sin'," she answered; and offered to make him a "het" drink if he'd get to his room.

But he said:

"Never mind, I'll try a mouthful o' gin."

And, turning on his heel, he left her.

In the morning the sexton was gone. Not only in his lodging was there no account of him, but, when inquiry began to be extended, nowhere in the village of Golden Friars could he be found.

Still he might have gone off, on business of his own, to some distant village, before the town was stirring; and the sexton had no near kindred to trouble their heads about him. People, therefore, were willing to wait, and take his return ultimately for granted.

At three o'clock the good Vicar, standing at his hall door, looking across the lake towards the noble fells that rise, steep and furrowed, from that beautiful mere, saw two men approaching across the green, in a straight line, from a boat that was moored at the water's edge. They were carrying between them something which, though not very large, seemed ponderous.

"Ye'll ken this, sir," said one of the boatmen as they set down, almost at his feet, a small church bell, such as in old-fashioned chimes yields the treble notes.

"This won't be less nor five stean. I ween it's fra' the church steeple yon."

"What! one of our church bells?" ejaculated the Vicar — for a moment lost in horrible amazement. "Oh, no! — *no*, that can't possibly be! Where did you find it?"

He had found the boat, in the morning, moored about fifty yards from her moorings where he had left it the night before, and could not think how that came to pass; and now, as he and his partner were about to take their oars, they discovered this bell in the bottom of the boat, under a bit of canvas, also the sexton's pick and spade — "tom-spey'ad," they termed that peculiar, broad-bladed implement.

"Very extraordinary! We must try whether there is a bell missing from the tower," said the Vicar, getting into a fuss. "Has Crooke come back yet? Does anyone know where he is?"

The sexton had not yet turned up.

"That's odd — that's provoking," said the Vicar. "However, my key will let us in. Place the bell in the hall while I get it; and then we can see what all this means."

To the church, accordingly, they went, the Vicar leading the way, with his own key in his hand. He turned it in the lock, and stood in the shadow of the ground porch, and shut the door.

A sack, half full, lay on the ground, with open mouth, a piece of cord lying beside it. Something clanked within it as one of the men shoved it aside with his clumsy shoe.

The Vicar opened the church door and peeped in. The dusky glow from the western sky, entering through a narrow window, illuminated the shafts and arches, the old oak carvings, and the discoloured monuments, with the melancholy glare of a dying fire.

The Vicar withdrew his head and closed the door. The gloom of the porch was deeper than ever as, stooping, he entered the narrow door that opened at the foot of the winding stair that leads to the first loft; from which a rude ladder-stair of wood, some five and twenty feet in height, mounts through a trap to the ringers' loft.

Up the narrow stairs the Vicar climbed, followed by his attendants, to the first loft. It was very dark: a narrow bow-slit in the thick wall admitted the only light they had to guide them. The ivy leaves, seen from the deep shadow, flashed and flickered redly, and the sparrows twittered among them.

"Will one of you be so good as to go up and count the bells, and see if they are all right?" said the Vicar. "There should be—"

"Agoy! what's that?" exclaimed one of the men, recoiling from the foot of the ladder.

"By Jen!" ejaculated the other, in equal surprise.

"Good gracious!" gasped the Vicar, who, seeing indistinctly a dark mass lying on the floor, had stooped to examine it, and placed his hand upon a cold, dead face.

The men drew the body into the streak of light that traversed the floor.

It was the corpse of Toby Crooke! There was a frightful scar across his forehead.

The alarm was given. Doctor Lincote, and Mr. Jarlcot, and Turnbull, of the George and Dragon, were on the spot immediately; and many curious and horrified spectators of minor importance.

The first thing ascertained was that the man must have been many hours dead. The next was that his skull was fractured, across the forehead, by an awful blow. The next was that his neck was broken.

His hat was found on the floor, where he had probably laid it, with his handkerchief in it.

The mystery now began to clear a little; for a bell — one of the chime hung in the tower — was found where it had rolled to, against the wall, with blood and hair on the rim of it, which corresponded with the grizzly fracture across the front of his head.

The sack that lay in the vestibule was examined, and found to contain all the church plate; a silver salver that had disappeared, about a month before, from Dr. Lincote's store of valuables; the Vicar's gold pencil-case, which he thought he had forgot in the vestry book; silver spoons, and various other contributions, levied from time to time off a dozen different households, the mysterious disappearance of which spoils had, of late years, begun to make the honest little community uncomfortable. Two bells had been taken down from the chime; and now the shrewd part of the assemblage, putting things together, began to comprehend the nefarious plans of the sexton, who lay mangled and dead on the floor of the tower, where only two days ago he had tolled the holy bell to call the good Christians of Golden Friars to worship.

The body was carried into the yard of the George and Dragon and laid in the old coachhouse; and the townsfolk came grouping in to have a peep at the corpse, and stood round, looking darkly, and talking as low as if they were in a church.

The Vicar, in gaiters and slightly shovel hat, stood erect, as one in a little circle of notables — the doctor, the attorney, Sir Geoffrey Mardykes, who happened to be in the town, and Turnbull, the host — in the centre of the paved yard, they having made an inspection of the body, at which troops of the village stragglers, to-ing and fro-ing, were gaping and frowning as they whispered their horrible conjectures.

"What d'ye think o' that?" said Tom Scales, the old hostler of the George, looking pale, with a stern, faint smile on his lips, as he and Dick Linklin sauntered out of the coachhouse together.

"The deaul will hev his ain noo," answered Dick, in his friend's ear. "T' sexton's got a craighdraw like he gav' the lass over the clints of Scarsdale; ye mind what the ald soger telt us when he hid his face in the kitchen of the George here? By Jen! I'll ne'er forget that story."

"I ween 'twas all true enough," replied the hostler; "and the sizzup he gav' the sleepin' man wi' t' poker across the forehead. See whar the edge o' t' bell took him, and smashed his ain, the selfsame lids. By ma sang, I wonder the deaul did na carry awa' his corpse i' the night, as he did wi' Tam Lunder's at Mooltern Mill."

"Hout, man, who ever sid t' deaul inside o' a church?"

"The corpse is ill-faur'd enew to scare Satan himsel', for that matter; though it's true what you say. Ay, ye're reet tul a trippet, thar; for Beelzebub dar'n't show his snout inside the church, not the length o' the black o' my nail."

While this discussion was going on, the gentlefolk who were talking the matter over in the centre of the yard had dispatched a message for the coroner all the way to the town of Hextan.

The last tint of sunset was fading from the sky by this time; so, of course, there was no thought of an inquest earlier than next day.

In the meantime it was horribly clear that the sexton had intended to rob the church of its plate, and had lost his life in the attempt to carry the second bell, as we have seen, down the worn ladder of the tower. He had tumbled backwards and broken his neck upon the floor of the loft; and the heavy bell, in its fall, descended with its edge across his forehead.

Never was a man more completely killed by a double catastrophe, in a moment.

The bells and the contents of the sack, it was surmised, he meant to have conveyed across the lake that night, and with the help of his spade and pick to have buried them in Clousted Forest, and returned, after an absence of but a few hours — as he easily might — before morning, unmissed and unobserved. He would no doubt, having secured his booty, have made such arrangements as would have made it appear that the church had been broken into. He would, of course, have taken all measures to divert suspicion from himself, and have watched a suitable opportunity to repossess himself of the buried treasure and dispose of it in safety.

And now came out, into sharp relief, all the stories that had, one way or other, stolen after him into the town. Old Mrs. Pullen fainted when she saw him, and told Doctor Lincote, after, that she thought he was the highwayman who fired the shot that killed the coachman the night they were robbed on Hounslow Heath. There were the stories also told by the wayfaring old soldier with the wooden leg, and fifty others, up to this more than half disregarded, but which now seized on the popular belief with a startling grasp.

The fleeting light soon expired, and twilight was succeeded by the early night.

The inn yard gradually became quiet; and the dead sexton lay alone, in the dark, on his back, locked up in the old coachhouse, the key of which was safe in the pocket of Tom Scales, the trusty old hostler of the George.

It was about eight o'clock, and the hostler, standing alone on the road in the front of the open door of the George and Dragon, had just smoked his pipe out. A bright moon hung in the frosty sky. The fells rose from the opposite edge of the lake like phantom mountains. The air was stirless. Through the boughs and sprays of the leafless elms no sigh or motion, however hushed, was audible. Not a ripple glimmered on the lake, which at one point only reflected the brilliant moon from its dark blue expanse like burnished steel. The road that runs by the inn door, along the margin of the lake, shone dazzlingly white.

White as ghosts, among the dark holly and juniper, stood the tall piers of the Vicar's gate, and their great stone balls, like heads, overlooking the same road, a few hundred yards up the lake, to the left. The early little town of Golden Friars was quiet by this time. Except for the townsfolk who were now collected in the kitchen of the inn itself, no inhabitant was now outside his own threshold.

Tom Scales was thinking of turning in. He was beginning to feel a little queer. He was thinking of the sexton, and could not get the fixed features of the dead man out of his head, when he heard the sharp though distant ring of a horse's hoof upon the frozen road. Tom's instinct apprized him of the approach of a guest to the George and Dragon. His experienced ear told him that the horseman was approaching by the Dardale road, which, after crossing that wide and dismal moss, passes the southern fells by Dunner Cleugh and finally enters the town of Golden Friars by joining the Mardykes road, at the edge of the lake, close to the gate of the Vicar's house.

A clump of tall trees stood at this point; but the moon shone full upon the road and cast their shadow backward.

The hoofs were plainly coming at a gallop, with a hollow rattle. The horseman was a long time in appearing. Tom wondered how he had heard the sound — so sharply frosty as the air was — so very far away.

He was right in his guess. The visitor was coming over the mountainous road from Dardale Moss; and he now saw a horseman, who must have turned the corner of the Vicar's house at the moment when his eye was wearied; for when he saw him for the first time he was advancing, in the hazy moonlight, like the shadow of a cavalier, at a gallop, upon the level strip of road that skirts the margin of the mere, between the George and the Vicar's piers.

The hostler had not long to wonder why the rider pushed his beast at so furious a pace, and how he came to have heard him, as he now calculated, at least three miles away. A very few moments sufficed to bring horse and rider to the inn door.

It was a powerful black horse, something like the great Irish hunter that figured a hundred years ago, and would carry sixteen stone with ease across country. It would have made a grand charger. Not a hair turned. It snorted, it pawed, it arched its neck; then threw back its ears and down its head, and looked ready to lash, and then to rear; and seemed impatient to be off again, and incapable of standing quiet for a moment.

The rider got down

As light as shadow falls.

But he was a tall, sinewy figure. He wore a cape or short mantle, a cocked hat, and a pair of jack-boots, such as held their ground in some primitive corners of England almost to the close of the last century.

"Take him, lad," said he to old Scales. "You need not walk or wisp him — he never sweats or tires. Give him his oats, and let him take his own time to eat them. House!" cried the stranger — in the old-fashioned form of summons which still lingered, at that time, in out-of-the-way places — in a deep and piercing voice.

As Tom Scales led the horse away to the stables it turned its head towards its master with a short, still neigh.

"About *your* business, old gentleman — we must not go too fast," the stranger cried back again to his horse, with a laugh as harsh and piercing; and he strode into the house.

The hostler led this horse into the inn yard. In passing, it sidled up to the coachhouse gate, within which lay the dead sexton — snorted, pawed and lowered its head suddenly, with ear close to the plank, as if listening for a sound from within; then uttered again the same short, piercing neigh.

The hostler was chilled at this mysterious coquetry with the dead. He liked the brute less and less every minute.

In the meantime, its master had proceeded.

"I'll go to the inn kitchen," he said, in his startling bass, to the drawer who met him in the passage.

And on he went, as if he had known the place all his days: not seeming to hurry himself — stepping leisurely, the servant thought — but gliding on at such a rate, nevertheless, that he had passed his guide and was in the kitchen of the George before the drawer had got much more than halfway to it.

A roaring fire of dry wood, peat and coal lighted up this snug but spacious apartment — flashing on pots and pans, and dressers high-piled with pewter plates and dishes; and making the uncertain shadows of the long "hanks" of onions and many a fitch and ham, depending from the ceiling, dance on its glowing surface.

The doctor and the attorney, even Sir Geoffrey Mardykes, did not disdain on this occasion to take chairs and smoke their pipes by the kitchen fire, where they were in the thick of the gossip and discussion excited by the terrible event.

The tall stranger entered uninvited.

He looked like a gaunt, athletic Spaniard of forty, burned half black in the sun, with a bony, flattened nose. A pair of fierce black eyes were just visible under the edge of his hat; and his mouth seemed divided, beneath the moustache, by the deep scar of a hare-lip.

Sir Geoffrey Mardykes and the host of the George, aided by the doctor and the attorney, were discussing and arranging, for the third or fourth time, their theories about the death and the probable plans of Toby Crooke, when the stranger entered.

The newcomer lifted his hat, with a sort of smile, for a moment from his black head.

"What do you call this place, gentlemen?" asked the stranger.

"The town of Golden Friars, sir," answered the doctor politely.

"The George and Dragon, sir: Anthony Turnbull, at your service," answered mine host, with a solemn bow, at the same moment — so that the two voices went together, as if the doctor and the innkeeper were singing a catch.

"The George and the Dragon," repeated the horseman, expanding his long hands over the fire which he had approached. "Saint George, King George, the Dragon, the Devil: it is a very grand idol, that outside your door, sir. You catch all sorts of worshippers — courtiers, fanatics, scamps: all's fish, eh? Everybody welcome, provided he drinks like one. Suppose you brew a bowl or two of punch. I'll stand it. How many are we? *Here* — count, and let us have enough. Gentlemen, I mean to spend the night here, and my horse is in the stable. What holiday, fun, or fair has got so many pleasant faces together? When I last called here — for, now I bethink me, I have seen the place before — you all looked sad. It was on a Sunday, that dismalest of holidays; and it would have been positively melancholy only that your sexton — that saint upon earth — Mr. Crooke, was here." He was looking round, over his shoulder, and added: "Ha! don't I see him there?"

Frightened a good deal were some of the company. All gaped in the direction in which, with a nod, he turned his eyes.

"He's *not* thar — he *can't* be thar — we *see* he's not thar," said Turnbull, as dogmatically as old Joe Willet might have delivered himself — for he did not care that the George should earn the reputation of a haunted house. "He's met an accident, sir: he's dead — he's elsewhere — and therefore can't be here."

Upon this the company entertained the stranger with the narrative — which they made easy by a division of labour, two or three generally speaking at a time, and no one being permitted to finish a second sentence without finding himself corrected and supplanted.

"The man's in Heaven, so sure as you're not," said the traveller so soon as the story was ended. "What! he was fiddling with the church bell, was he, and d — d for that — eh? Landlord, get us some drink. A sexton d — d for pulling down a church bell he has been pulling at for ten years!"

"You came, sir, by the Dardale-road, I believe?" said the doctor (village folk are curious). "A dismal moss is Dardale Moss, sir; and a bleak clim' up the fells on t' other side."

"I say 'Yes' to all — from Dardale Moss, as black as pitch and as rotten as the grave, up that zigzag wall you call a road, that looks like chalk in the moonlight, through Dunner Cleugh, as dark as a coal-pit, and down here to the George and the Dragon, where you have a roaring fire, wise men, good punch — here it is — and a corpse in your coachhouse. Where the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together. Come, landlord, ladle out the nectar. Drink, gentlemen — drink, all. Brew another bowl at the bar. How divinely it stinks of alcohol! I hope you like it, gentlemen: it smells all over of spices, like a mummy. Drink, friends. Ladle, landlord. Drink, all. Serve it out."

The guest fumbled in his pocket, and produced three guineas, which he slipped into Turnbull's fat palm.

"Let punch flow till that's out. I'm an old friend of the house. I call here, back and forward. I know you well, Turnbull, though you don't recognize me."

"You have the advantage of me, sir," said Mr. Turnbull, looking hard on that dark and sinister countenance — which, or the like of which, he could have sworn he had never seen before in his life. But he liked the weight and colour of his guineas, as he dropped them into his pocket. "I hope you will find yourself comfortable while you stay."

"You have given me a bedroom?"

"Yes, sir — the cedar chamber."

"I know it — the very thing. No — no punch for me. By and by, perhaps."

The talk went on, but the stranger had grown silent. He had seated himself on an oak bench by the fire, towards which he ended his feet and hands with seeming enjoyment; his cocked hat being, however, a little over his face.

Gradually the company began to thin. Sir Geoffrey Mardykes was the first to go; then some of the humbler townsfolk. The last bowl of punch was on its last legs. The stranger walked into the passage and said to the drawer:

"Fetch me a lantern. I must see my nag. Light it — hey! That will do. No — you need not come."

The gaunt traveller took it from the man's hand and strode along the passage to the door of the stableyard, which he opened and passed out.

Tom Scales, standing on the pavement, was looking through the stable window at the horses when the stranger plucked his shirtsleeve. With an inward shock the hostler found himself alone in presence of the very person he had been thinking of.

"I say — they tell me you have something to look at in there" — he pointed with his thumb at the old coachhouse door. "Let us have a peep."

Tom Scales happened to be at that moment in a state of mind highly favourable to anyone in search of a submissive instrument. He was in great perplexity, and even perturbation. He suffered the stranger to lead him to the coachhouse gate.

"You must come in and hold the lantern," said he. "I'll pay you handsomely."

The old hostler applied his key and removed the padlock.

"What are you afraid of? Step in and throw the light on his face," said the stranger grimly. "Throw open the lantern: stand *there*. Stoop over him a little — he won't bite you. Steady, or you may pass the night with him!"

In the meantime the company at the George had dispersed; and, shortly after, Anthony Turnbull — who, like a good landlord, was always last in bed, and first up, in his house — was taking, alone, his last look round the kitchen before making his final visit to the stableyard, when Tom Scales tottered into the kitchen, looking like death, his hair standing upright; and he sat down on an oak chair, all in a tremble, wiped his forehead with his hand, and, instead of speaking, heaved a great sigh or two.

It was not till after he had swallowed a dram of brandy that he found his voice, and said:

"We've the deaul himsel' in t' house! By Jen! ye'd best send fo t' sir" (the clergyman). "Happen he'll tak him in hand wi' holy writ, and send him elsewhidder deftly. Lord atween us and harm! I'm a sinfu' man. I tell ye, Mr. Turnbull, I dar' n't stop in t' George tonight under the same roof wi' him."

"Ye mean the ra-beyoned, black-feyaced lad, wi' the brocken neb? Why, that's a gentleman wi' a pocket ful o' guineas, man, and a horse worth fifty pounds!"

"That horse is no better nor his rider. The nags that were in the stable wi' him, they all tuk the creepins, and sweated like rain down a thack. I tuk them all out o' that, away from him, into the hack-stable, and I thocht I cud never get them past him. But that's not all. When I was keekin into t' winda at the nags, he comes behind me and claps his claw on ma shoulder, and he gars me gang wi' him, and open the aad coachhouse door, and haad the cannle for him, till he peaked into the deed man't feyace; and, as God's my judge, I sid the corpse open its eyes and wark its mouth, like a man smoorin' and strivin' to talk. I cudna move or say a word, though I felt my hair rising on my heed; but at lang-last I gev a yelloch, and say I, 'La! what is that?' And he himsel' looked round on me, like the devil he is; and, wi' a skirl o' a laugh, he strikes the lantern out o' my hand. When I cum to myself we were outside the coachhouse door. The moon was shinin' in, and I cud see the corpse stretched on the table whar we left it; and he kicked the door to wi' a purr o' his foot. 'Lock it,' says he; and so I did. And here's the key for ye — tak it yoursel', sir. He offer'd me money: he said he'd mak me a rich man if I'd sell him the corpse, and help him awa' wi' it."

"Hout, man! What cud he want o' t' corpse? He's not doctor, to do a' that lids. He was takin' a rise out o' ye, lad," said Turnbull.

"Na, na — he wants the corpse. There's summat you a' me can't tell he wants to do wi' 't; and he'd liefer get it wi' sin and thievin', and the damage of my soul. He's one of them freytens a boo or a dobbies off Dardale Moss, that's always astir wi' the like after nightfall; unless — Lord save us! — he be the deaul himsel'."

"Whar is he noo?" asked the landlord, who was growing uncomfortable.

"He spang'd up the back stair to his room. I wonder you didn't hear him trampin' like a wild horse; and he clapt his door that the house shook again — but Lord knows whar he is noo. Let us gang awa's up to the Vicar's, and gan *him* come down, and talk wi' him."

"Hoity toity, man — you're too easy scared," said the landlord, pale enough by this time. "'Twould be a fine thing, truly, to send abroad that the house was haunted by the deaul himsel'! Why, 'twould be the ruin o' the George. You're sure ye locked the

door on the corpse?"

"Aye, sir — sartain."

"Come wi' me, Tom — we'll gi' a last look round the yard."

So, side by side, with many a jealous look right and left, and over their shoulders, they went in silence. On entering the old-fashioned quadrangle, surrounded by stables and other offices — built in the antique cagework fashion — they stopped for a while under the shadow of the inn gable, and looked round the yard, and listened. All was silent — nothing stirring.

The stable lantern was lighted; and with it in his hand Tony Turnbull, holding Tom Scales by the shoulder, advanced. He hauled Tom after him for a step or two; then stood still and shoved him before him for a step or two more; and thus cautiously — as a pair of skirmishers under fire — they approached the coachhouse door.

"There, ye see — all safe," whispered Tom, pointing to the lock, which hung — distinct in the moonlight — in its place. "Cum back, I say!"

"Cum on, say I!" retorted the landlord valorously. "It would never do to allow any tricks to be played with the chap in there" — he pointed to the coachhouse door.

"The coroner here in the morning, and never a corpse to sit on!" He unlocked the padlock with these words, having handed the lantern to Tom. "Here, keck in, Tom," he continued; "ye hev the lantern — and see if all's as ye left it."

"Not me — na, not for the George and a' that's in it!" said Tom, with a shudder, sternly, as he took a step backward.

"What the — what are ye afraid on? Gi' me the lantern — it is all one: I will."

And cautiously, little by little, he opened the door; and, holding the lantern over his head in the narrow slit, he peeped in — frowning and pale — with one eye, as if he expected something to fly in his face. He closed the door without speaking, and locked it again.

"As safe as a thief in a mill," he whispered with a nod to his companion. And at that moment a harsh laugh overhead broke the silence startlingly, and set all the poultry in the yard gabbling.

"Thar he be!" said Tom, clutching the landlord's arm — "in the winda — see!"

The window of the cedar-room, up two pair of stairs, was open; and in the shadow a darker outline was visible of a man, with his elbows on the window-stone, looking down upon them.

"Look at his eyes — like two live coals!" gasped Tom.

The landlord could not see all this so sharply, being confused, and not so long-sighted as Tom.

"Time, sir," called Tony Turnbull, turning cold as he thought he saw a pair of eyes shining down redly at him — "time for honest folk to be in their beds, and asleep!"

"As sound as your sexton!" said the jeering voice from above.

"Come out of this," whispered the landlord fiercely to his hostler, plucking him hard by the sleeve.

They got into the house, and shut the door.

"I wish we were shot of him," said the landlord, with something like a groan, as he leaned against the wall of the passage. "I'll sit up, anyhow — and, Tom, you'll sit wi' me. Cum into the gunroom. No one shall steal the dead man out of my yard while I can draw a trigger."

The gunroom in the George is about twelve feet square. It projects into the stableyard and commands a full view of the old coachhouse; and, through a narrow side window, a flanking view of the back door of the inn, through which the yard is reached.

Tony Turnbull took down the blunderbuss — which was the great ordnance of the house — and loaded it with a stiff charge of pistol bullets.

He put on a greatcoat which hung there, and was his covering when he went out at night, to shoot wild ducks. Tom made himself comfortable likewise. They then sat down at the window, which was open, looking into the yard, the opposite side of which was white in the brilliant moonlight.

The landlord laid the blunderbuss across his knees, and stared into the yard. His comrade stared also. The door of the gunroom was locked; so they felt tolerably secure.

An hour passed; nothing had occurred. Another. The clock struck one. The shadows had shifted a little; but still the moon shone full on the old coachhouse, and the stable where the guest's horse stood.

Turnbull thought he heard a step on the backstair. Tom was watching the back-door through the side window, with eyes glazing with the intensity of his stare. Anthony Turnbull, holding his breath, listened at the room door. It was a false alarm.

When he came back to the window looking into the yard:

"Hish! Look thar!" said he in a vehement whisper.

From the shadow at the left they saw the figure of the gaunt horseman, in short cloak and jack-boots, emerge. He pushed open the stable door, and led out his powerful black horse. He walked it across the front of the building till he reached the old coachhouse door; and there, with its bridle on its neck, he left it standing, while he stalked to the yard gate; and, dealing it a kick with his heel, it sprang back with the rebound, shaking from top to bottom, and stood open. The stranger returned to the side of his horse; and the door which secured the corpse of the dead sexton seemed to swing slowly open of itself as he entered, and returned with the corpse in his arms, and swung it across the shoulders of the horse, and instantly sprang into the saddle.

"Fire!" shouted Tom, and bang went the blunderbuss with a stunning crack. A thousand sparrows' wings winnowed through the air from the thick ivy. The watchdog yelled a furious bark. There was a strange ring and whistle in the air. The blunderbuss had burst to shivers right down to the very breech. The recoil rolled the innkeeper upon his back on the floor, and Tom Scales was flung against the side of the recess of the window, which had saved him from a tumble as violent. In this position they heard the searing laugh of the departing horseman, and saw him ride out of the gate with his ghastly burden.

Perhaps some of my readers, like myself, have heard this story told by Roger Turnbull, now host of the George and Dragon, the grandson of the very Tony who then swayed the spigot and keys of that inn, in the identical kitchen of which the fiend treated so many of the neighbours to punch.

What infernal object was subserved by the possession of the dead villain's body, I have not learned. But a very curious story, in which a vampire resuscitation of Crooke the sexton figures, may throw a light upon this part of the tale.

The result of Turnbull's shot at the disappearing fiend certainly justifies old Andrew Moreton's dictum, which is thus expressed in his curious "History of Apparitions": "I warn rash brands who, pretending not to fear the devil, are for using the ordinary violences with him, which affect one man from another — or with an apparition, in which they may be sure to receive some mischief. I knew one fired a gun at an apparition and the gun burst in a hundred pieces in his hand; another struck at an apparition with a sword, and broke his sword in pieces and wounded his hand grievously; and 'tis next to madness for anyone to go that way to work with any spirit, be it angel or be it devil."

THE DREAM

Dreams! What age, or what country of the world, has not felt and acknowledged the mystery of their origin and end? I have thought not a little upon the subject, seeing it is one which has been often forced upon my attention, and sometimes strangely enough; and yet I have never arrived at anything which at all appeared a satisfactory conclusion. It does appear that a mental phenomenon so extraordinary cannot be wholly without its use. We know, indeed, that in the olden times it has been made the organ of communication between the Deity and His creatures; and when a dream produces upon a mind, to all appearance hopelessly reprobate and depraved, an effect so powerful and so lasting as to break down the inveterate habits, and to reform the life of an abandoned sinner, we see in the result, in the reformation of morals which appeared incorrigible, in the reclamation of a human soul which seemed to be irretrievably lost, something more than could be produced by a mere chimera of the slumbering fancy, something more than could arise from the capricious images of a terrified imagination. And while Reason rejects as absurd the superstition which will read a prophecy in every dream, she may, without violence to herself, recognize, even in the wildest and most incongruous of the wanderings of a slumbering intellect, the evidences and the fragments of a language which may be spoken, which *has* been spoken, to terrify, to warn and to command. We have reason to believe too, by the promptness of action which in the age of the prophets followed all intimations of this kind, and by the strength of conviction and strange permanence of the effects resulting from certain dreams in latter times — which effects we ourselves may have witnessed — that when this medium of communication has been employed by the Deity, the evidences of His presence have been unequivocal. My thoughts were directed to this subject in a manner to leave a lasting impression upon my mind, by the events which I shall now relate, the statement of which, however extraordinary, is nevertheless accurate.

About the year 17 — , having been appointed to the living of C — h, I rented a small house in the town which bears the same name: one morning in the month of November, I was awakened before my usual time by my servant, who bustled into my bedroom for the purpose of announcing a sick call. As the Catholic Church holds her last rites to be totally indispensable to the safety of the departing sinner, no conscientious clergyman can afford a moment's unnecessary delay, and in little more than five minutes I stood ready, cloaked and booted for the road, in the small front parlour in which the messenger, who was to act as my guide, awaited my coming. I found a poor little girl crying piteously near the door, and after some slight difficulty I ascertained that her father was either dead or just dying.

"And what may be your father's name, my poor child?" said I. She held down her head as if ashamed. I repeated the question, and the wretched little creature burst into floods of tears still more bitter than she had shed before. At length, almost angered by conduct which appeared to me so unreasonable, I began to lose patience, and I said rather harshly, —

"If you will not tell me the name of the person to whom you would lead me, your silence can arise from no good motive, and I might be justified in refusing to go with you at all."

"Oh, don't say that — don't say that!" cried she. "Oh, sir, it was that I was afraid of when I would not tell you — I was afraid, when you heard his name, you would not come with me; but it is no use hidin' it now — it's Pat Connell, the carpenter, your honour."

She looked in my face with the most earnest anxiety, as if her very existence depended upon what she should read there. I relieved the child at once. The name, indeed, was most unpleasantly familiar to me; but, however fruitless my visits and advice might have been at another time, the present was too fearful an occasion to suffer my doubts of their utility, or my reluctance to re-attempting what appeared a hopeless task, to weigh even against the lightest chance that a consciousness of his imminent danger might produce in him a more docile and tractable disposition. Accordingly I told the child to lead the way, and followed her in silence. She hurried rapidly through the long narrow street which forms the great thoroughfare of the town. The darkness of the hour, rendered still deeper by the close approach of the old-fashioned houses, which lowered in tall obscurity on either side of the way; the damp, dreary chill which renders the advance of morning peculiarly cheerless, combined with the object of my walk — to visit the deathbed of a presumptuous sinner, to endeavour, almost against my own conviction, to infuse a hope into the heart of a dying reprobate — a drunkard but too probably perishing under the consequences of some mad fit of intoxication; all these circumstances served to enhance the gloom and solemnity of my feelings, as I silently followed my little guide, who with quick steps traversed the uneven pavement of the Main Street. After a walk of about five minutes, she turned off into a narrow lane, of that obscure and comfortless class which is to be found in almost all small old-fashioned towns, chill, without ventilation, reeking with all manner of offensive effluvia, and lined by dingy, smoky, sickly and pent-up buildings, frequently not only in a wretched but in a dangerous condition.

"Your father has changed his abode since I last visited him, and, I am afraid, much for the worse," said I.

"Indeed he has, sir; but we must not complain," replied she. "We have to thank God that we have lodging and food, though it's poor enough, it is, your honour."

Poor child! thought I. How many an older head might learn wisdom from thee — how many a luxurious philosopher, who is skilled to preach but not to suffer, might not thy patient words put to the blush! The manner and language of my companion were alike above her years and station; and, indeed, in all cases in which the cares and sorrows of life have anticipated their usual date, and have fallen, as they sometimes do, with melancholy prematurity to the lot of childhood, I have observed the result to have proved uniformly the same. A young mind, to which joy and indulgence have been strangers, and to which suffering and self-denial have been familiarized from the first, acquires a solidity and an elevation which no other discipline could have bestowed, and which, in the present case, communicated a striking but mournful peculiarity to the manners, even to the voice, of the child. We paused before a narrow, crazy door, which she opened by means of a latch, and we forthwith began to ascend the steep and broken stairs which led to the sick man's room.

As we mounted flight after flight towards the garret-floor, I heard more and more distinctly the hurried talking of many voices. I could also distinguish the low sobbing of a female. On arriving upon the uppermost lobby, these sounds became fully audible.

"This way, your honour," said my little conductress; at the same time, pushing open a door of patched and half-rotten plank, she admitted me into the squalid chamber of death and misery. But one candle, held in the fingers of a scared and haggard-looking child, was burning in the room, and that so dim that all was twilight or darkness except within its immediate influence. The general obscurity, however, served to throw into prominent and startling relief the deathbed and its occupant. The light fell with horrible clearness upon the blue and swollen features of the drunkard. I did not think it possible that a human countenance could look so terrific. The lips were black and drawn apart; the teeth were firmly set; the eyes a little unclosed, and nothing but the whites appearing. Every feature was fixed and livid, and the whole face wore a ghastly and rigid expression of despairing terror such as I never saw equalled. His hands were crossed upon his breast, and firmly clenched; while, as if to add to the corpse-like effect of the whole, some white cloths, dipped in water, were wound about the forehead and temples.

As soon as I could remove my eyes from this horrible spectacle, I observed my friend Dr. D — , one of the most humane of a humane profession, standing by the bedside. He had been attempting, but unsuccessfully, to bleed the patient, and had now applied his finger to the pulse.

"Is there any hope?" I inquired in a whisper.

A shake of the head was the reply. There was a pause, while he continued to hold the wrist; but he waited in vain for the throb of life — it was not there: and when he let go the hand, it fell stiffly back into its former position upon the other.

"The man is dead," said the physician, as he turned from the bed where the terrible figure lay.

Dead! thought I, scarcely venturing to look upon the tremendous and revolting spectacle. Dead! without an hour for repentance, even a moment for reflection. Dead! without the rites which even the best should have. Was there a hope for him? The glaring eyeball, the grinning mouth, the distorted brow — that unutterable look in which a painter would have sought to embody the fixed despair of the nethermost hell — These were my answer.

The poor wife sat at a little distance, crying as if her heart would break — the younger children clustered round the bed, looking with wondering curiosity upon the form of death, never seen before.

When the first tumult of uncontrollable sorrow had passed away, availing myself of the solemnity and impressiveness of the scene, I desired the heart-stricken family to accompany me in prayer, and all knelt down while I solemnly and fervently repeated some of those prayers which appeared most applicable to the occasion. I employed myself thus in a manner which I trusted was not unprofitable, at least to the living, for about ten minutes; and having accomplished my task, I was the first to arise.

I looked upon the poor, sobbing, helpless creatures who knelt so humbly around me, and my heart bled for them. With a natural transition I turned my eyes from them to the bed in which the body lay; and, great God! what was the revulsion, the horror which I experienced on seeing the corpse-like, terrific thing seated half upright before me. The white cloths which had been wound about the head had now partly slipped from their position, and were hanging in grotesque festoons about the face and shoulders, while the distorted eyes leered from amid them —

"A sight to dream of, not to tell."

I stood actually riveted to the spot. The figure nodded its head and lifted its arm, I thought, with a menacing gesture. A thousand confused and horrible thoughts at once rushed upon my mind. I had often read that the body of a presumptuous sinner, who, during life, had been the willing creature of every satanic impulse, had been known, after the human tenant had deserted it, to become the horrible sport of demoniac possession.

I was roused by the piercing scream of the mother, who now, for the first time, perceived the change which had taken place. She rushed towards the bed, but, stunned by the shock and overcome by the conflict of violent emotions, before she reached it she fell prostrate upon the floor.

I am perfectly convinced that had I not been startled from the torpidity of horror in which I was bound by some powerful and arousing stimulant, I should have gazed upon this unearthly apparition until I had fairly lost my senses. As it was, however, the spell was broken — superstition gave way to reason: the man whom all believed to have been actually dead was living!

Dr. D — was instantly standing by the bedside, and upon examination he found that a sudden and copious flow of blood had taken place from the wound which the lancet had left; and this, no doubt, had effected his sudden and almost preternatural restoration to an existence from which all thought he had been for ever removed. The man was still speechless, but he seemed to understand the physician when he forbade his repeating the painful and fruitless attempts which he made to articulate, and he at once resigned himself quietly into his hands.

I left the patient with leeches upon his temples, and bleeding freely, apparently with little of the drowsiness which accompanies apoplexy. Indeed, Dr. D — told me that he had never before witnessed a seizure which seemed to combine the symptoms of so many kinds, and yet which belonged to none of the recognized classes; it certainly was not apoplexy, catalepsy, nor *delirium tremens*, and yet it seemed, in some degree, to partake of the properties of all. It was strange, but stranger things are coming.

During two or three days Dr. D — would not allow his patient to converse in a manner which could excite or exhaust him, with anyone; he suffered him merely as briefly as possible to express his immediate wants. And it was not until the fourth day after my early visit, the particulars of which I have just detailed, that it was thought expedient that I should see him, and then only because it appeared that his extreme importunity and impatience to meet me were likely to retard his recovery more than the mere exhaustion attendant upon a short conversation could possibly do. Perhaps, too, my friend entertained some hope that if by holy confession his patient's bosom were eased of the perilous stuff which no doubt oppressed it, his recovery would be more assured and rapid. It was then, as I have said, upon the fourth day after my first professional call, that I found myself once more in the dreary chamber of want and sickness.

The man was in bed, and appeared low and restless. On my entering the room he raised himself in the bed, and muttered, twice or thrice, —

"Thank God! thank God!"

I signed to those of his family who stood by to leave the room, and took a chair beside the bed. So soon as we were alone, he said, rather doggedly, —

"There's no use in telling me of the sinfulness of bad ways — I know it all. I know where they lead to — I have seen everything about it with my own eyesight, as plain as I see you." He rolled himself in the bed, as if to hide his face in the clothes; and then suddenly raising himself, he exclaimed with startling vehemence, "Look, sir! there is no use in mincing the matter: I'm blasted with the fires of hell; I have been in hell. What do you think of that? In hell — I'm lost for ever — I have not a chance. I am damned already — damned — damned!"

The end of this sentence he actually shouted. His vehemence was perfectly terrific; he threw himself back, and laughed, and sobbed hysterically. I poured some water into a tea-cup, and gave it to him. After he had swallowed it, I told him if he had anything to communicate, to do so as briefly as he could, and in a manner as little agitating to himself as possible; threatening at the same time, though I had no intention of doing so, to leave him at once in case he again gave way to such passionate excitement.

"It's only foolishness," he continued, "for me to try to thank you for coming to such a villain as myself at all. It's no use for me to wish good to you, or to bless you; for such as me has no blessings to give."

I told him that I had but done my duty, and urged him to proceed to the matter which weighed upon his mind. He then spoke nearly as follows: —

"I came in drunk on Friday night last, and got to my bed here; I don't remember how. Sometime in the night it seemed to me I wakened, and feeling unasy in myself, I got up out of the bed. I wanted the fresh air; but I would not make a noise to open the window, for fear I'd waken the crathurs. It was very dark and troublesome to find the door; but at last I did get it, and I groped my way out, and went down as asy as I could. I felt quite sober, and I counted the steps one after another, as I was going down, that I might not stumble at the bottom.

"When I came to the first landing-place — God be about us always! — the floor of it sunk under me, and I went down — down — down, till the senses almost left me. I do not know how long I was falling, but it seemed to me a great while. When I came rightly to myself at last, I was sitting near the top of a great table; and I could not see the end of it, if it had any, it was so far off. And there was men beyond reckoning sitting down all along by it, at each side, as far as I could see at all. I did not know at first was it in the open air; but there was a close smothering feel in it that was not natural. And there was a kind of light that my eyesight never saw before, red and unsteady; and I did not see for a long time where it was coming from, until I looked straight up, and then I seen that it came from great balls of blood-coloured fire that were rolling high overhead with a sort of rushing, trembling sound, and I perceived that they shone on the ribs of a great roof of rock that was arched overhead instead of the sky. When I seen this, scarce knowing what I did, I got up, and I said, 'I have no right to be here; I must go.' And the man that was sitting at my left hand only smiled, and said, 'Sit down again; you can *never* leave this place.' And his voice was weaker than any child's voice I ever heerd; and when he was done speaking he smiled again.

"Then I spoke out very loud and bold, and I said, 'In the name of God, let me out of this bad place.' And there was a great man that I did not see before, sitting at the end of the table that I was near; and he was taller than twelve men, and his face was very proud and terrible to look at. And he stood up and stretched out his hand before him; and when he stood up, all that was there, great and small, bowed down with a sighing sound; and a dread came on my heart, and he looked at me, and I could not speak. I felt I was his own, to do what he liked with, for I knew at once who he was; and he said, 'If you promise to return, you may depart for a season;' and the voice he spoke with was terrible and mournful, and the echoes of it went rolling and swelling down the endless cave, and mixing with the trembling of the fire overhead; so that when he sat down there was a sound after him, all through the place, like the roaring of a furnace. And I said, with all the strength I had, 'I promise to come back — in God's name let me go!'

"And with that I lost the sight and the hearing of all that was there, and when my senses came to me again, I was sitting in the bed with the blood all over me, and you and the rest praying around the room."

Here he paused, and wiped away the chill drops which hung upon his forehead.

I remained silent for some moments. The vision which he had just described struck my imagination not a little, for this was long before Vathek and the "Hall of Eblis" had delighted the world; and the description which he gave had, as I received it, all the attractions of novelty beside the impressiveness which always belongs to the narration of an *eye-witness*, whether in the body or in the spirit, of the scenes which he describes. There was something, too, in the stern horror with which the man related these things, and in the incongruity of his description with the vulgarly received notions of the great place of punishment, and of its presiding spirit, which struck my mind with awe, almost with fear. At length he said, with an expression of horrible, imploring earnestness, which I shall never forget, —

"Well, sir, is there any hope; is there any chance at all? or is my soul pledged and promised away for ever? is it gone out of my power? must I go back to the place?"

In answering him, I had no easy task to perform; for however clear might be my internal conviction of the groundlessness of his fears, and however strong my scepticism respecting the reality of what he had described, I nevertheless felt that his impression to the contrary, and his humility and terror resulting from it, might be made available as no mean engines in the work of his conversion from profligacy, and of his restoration to decent habits and to religious feeling.

I therefore told him that he was to regard his dream rather in the light of a warning than in that of a prophecy; that our salvation depended not upon the word or deed of a moment, but upon the habits of a life; that, in fine, if he at once discarded his idle companions and evil habits, and firmly adhered to a sober, industrious, and religious course of life, the powers of darkness might claim his soul in vain, for that there were higher and firmer pledges than human tongue could utter, which promised salvation to him who should repent and lead a new life.

I left him much comforted, and with a promise to return upon the next day. I did so, and found him much more cheerful, and without any remains of the dogged sullenness which I suppose had arisen from his despair. His promises of amendment were given in that tone of deliberate earnestness which belongs to deep and solemn determination; and it was with no small delight that I observed, after repeated visits, that his good resolutions, so far from failing, did but gather strength by time; and when I saw that man shake off the idle and debauched companions whose society had for years formed alike his amusement and his ruin, and

revive his long-discarded habits of industry and sobriety, I said within myself, There is something more in all this than the operation of an idle dream.

One day, some time after his perfect restoration to health, I was surprised, on ascending the stairs for the purpose of visiting this man, to find him busily employed in nailing down some planks upon the landing-place, through which, at the commencement of his mysterious vision, it seemed to him that he had sunk. I perceived at once that he was strengthening the floor with a view to securing himself against such a catastrophe, and could scarcely forbear a smile as I bid "God bless his work."

He perceived my thoughts, I suppose, for he immediately said:

"I can never pass over that floor without trembling. I'd leave this house if I could, but I can't find another lodging in the town so cheap, and I'll not take a better till I've paid off all my debts, please God; but I could not be asy in my mind till I made it as safe as I could. You'll hardly believe me, your honour, that while I'm working, maybe a mile away, my heart is in a flutter the whole way back, with the bare thoughts of the two little steps I have to walk upon this bit of a floor. So it's no wonder, sir, I'd thry to make it sound and firm with any idle timber I have."

I applauded his resolution to pay off his debts, and the steadiness with which he perused his plans of conscientious economy, and passed on.

Many months elapsed, and still there appeared no alteration in his resolutions of amendment. He was a good workman, and with his better habits he recovered his former extensive and profitable employment. Everything seemed to promise comfort and respectability. I have little more to add, and that shall be told quickly. I had one evening met Pat Connell, as he returned from his work, and as usual, after a mutual, and on his side respectful salutation, I spoke a few words of encouragement and approval. I left him industrious, active, healthy — when next I saw him, not three days after, he was a corpse.

The circumstances which marked the event of his death were somewhat strange — I might say fearful. The unfortunate man had accidentally met an old friend just returned, after a long absence; and in a moment of excitement, forgetting everything in the warmth of his joy, he yielded to his urgent invitation to accompany him into a public house, which lay close by the spot where the encounter had taken place. Connell, however, previously to entering the room, had announced his determination to take nothing more than the strictest temperance would warrant.

But oh! who can describe the inveterate tenacity with which a drunkard's habits cling to him through life? He may repent, he may reform, he may look with actual abhorrence upon his past profligacy; but amid all this reformation and compunction, who can tell the moment in which the base and ruinous propensity may not recur, triumphing over resolution, remorse, shame, everything, and prostrating its victim once more in all that is destructive and revolting in that fatal vice?

The wretched man left the place in a state of utter intoxication. He was brought home nearly insensible, and placed in his bed. The younger part of the family retired to rest much after their usual hour; but the poor wife remained up sitting by the fire, too much grieved and shocked at the occurrence of what she had so little expected, to settle to rest. Fatigue, however, at length overcame her, and she sank gradually into an uneasy slumber. She could not tell how long she had remained in this state; but when she awakened, and immediately on opening her eyes, she perceived by the faint red light of the smouldering turf embers, two persons, one of whom she recognized as her husband, noiselessly gliding out of the room.

"Pat, darling, where are you going?" said she.

There was no answer — the door closed after them; but in a moment she was startled and terrified by a loud and heavy crash, as if some ponderous body had been hurled down the stair.

Much alarmed, she started up, and going to the head of the staircase, she called repeatedly upon her husband, but in vain.

She returned to the room, and with the assistance of her daughter, whom I had occasion to mention before, she succeeded in finding and lighting a candle, with which she hurried again to the head of the staircase.

At the bottom lay what seemed to be a bundle of clothes, heaped together, motionless, lifeless — it was her husband. In going down the stairs, for what purpose can never now be known, he had fallen helplessly and violently to the bottom, and coming head foremost, the spine of the neck had been dislocated by the shock, and instant death must have ensued.

The body lay upon that landing-place to which his dream had referred.

It is scarcely worth endeavouring to clear up a single point in a narrative where all is mystery; yet I could not help suspecting that the second figure which had been seen in the room by Connell's wife on the night of his death might have been no other than his own shadow.

I suggested this solution of the difficulty; but she told me that the unknown person had been considerably in advance of her husband, and on reaching the door, had turned back as if to communicate something to his companion. It was, then, a mystery. Was the dream verified? — whither had the disembodied spirit sped? who can say? We know not. But I left the house of death that day in a state of horror which I could not describe. It seemed to me that I was scarce awake. I heard and saw everything as if under the spell of a nightmare. The coincidence was terrible.

SQUIRE TOBY'S WILL

A GHOST STORY

Many persons accustomed to travel the old York and London road, in the days of stagecoaches, will remember passing, in the afternoon, say, of an autumn day, in their journey to the capital, about three miles south of the town of Applebury, and a mile and a half before you reach the old Angel Inn, a large black-and-white house, as those old-fashioned cagework habitations are termed, dilapidated and weather-stained, with broad lattice windows glimmering all over in the evening sun with little diamond panes, and thrown into relief by a dense background of ancient elms. A wide avenue, now overgrown like a churchyard with grass and weeds, and flanked by double rows of the same dark trees, old and gigantic, with here and there a gap in their solemn files, and sometimes a fallen tree lying across on the avenue, leads up to the hall-door.

Looking up its sombre and lifeless avenue from the top of the London coach, as I have often done, you are struck with so many signs of desertion and decay, — the tufted grass sprouting in the chinks of the steps and window-stones, the smokeless chimneys over which the jackdaws are wheeling, the absence of human life and all its evidence, that you conclude at once that the place is uninhabited and abandoned to decay. The name of this ancient house is Gylingden Hall. Tall hedges and old timber quickly shroud the old place from view, and about a quarter of a mile further on you pass, embowered in melancholy trees, a small and ruinous Saxon chapel, which, time out of mind, has been the burying-place of the family of Marston, and partakes of the neglect and desolation which brood over their ancient dwelling-place.

The grand melancholy of the secluded valley of Gylingden, lonely as an enchanted forest, in which the crows returning to their roosts among the trees, and the straggling deer who peep from beneath their branches, seem to hold a wild and undisturbed dominion, heightens the forlorn aspect of Gylingden Hall.

Of late years repairs have been neglected, and here and there the roof is stripped, and “the stitch in time” has been wanting. At the side of the house exposed to the gales that sweep through the valley like a torrent through its channel, there is not a perfect window left, and the shutters but imperfectly exclude the rain. The ceilings and walls are mildewed and green with damp stains. Here and there, where the drip falls from the ceiling, the floors are rotting. On stormy nights, as the guard described, you can hear the doors clapping in the old house, as far away as old Gryston bridge, and the howl and sobbing of the wind through its empty galleries.

About seventy years ago died the old Squire, Toby Marston, famous in that part of the world for his hounds, his hospitality, and his vices. He had done kind things, and he had fought duels: he had given away money and he had horse-whipped people. He carried with him some blessings and a good many curses, and left behind him an amount of debts and charges upon the estates which appalled his two sons, who had no taste for business or accounts, and had never suspected, till that wicked, open-handed, and swearing old gentleman died, how very nearly he had run the estates into insolvency.

They met at Gylingden Hall. They had the will before them, and lawyers to interpret, and information without stint, as to the encumbrances with which the deceased had saddled them. The will was so framed as to set the two brothers instantly at deadly feud.

These brothers differed in some points; but in one material characteristic they resembled one another, and also their departed father. They never went into a quarrel by halves, and once in, they did not stick at trifles.

The elder, Scroope Marston, the more dangerous man of the two, had never been a favourite of the old Squire. He had no taste for the sports of the field and the pleasures of a rustic life. He was no athlete, and he certainly was not handsome. All this the Squire resented. The young man, who had no respect for him, and outgrew his fear of his violence as he came to manhood, retorted. This aversion, therefore, in the ill-conditioned old man grew into positive hatred. He used to wish that d —— d pippin-squeezing, hump-backed rascal Scroope, out of the way of better men — meaning his younger son Charles; and in his cups would talk in a way which even the old and young fellows who followed his hounds, and drank his port, and could stand a reasonable amount of brutality, did not like.

Scroope Marston was slightly deformed, and he had the lean sallow face, piercing black eyes, and black lank hair, which sometimes accompany deformity.

“I’m no feyther o’ that hog-backed creature. I’m no sire of hisn, d —— n him! I’d as soon call that tongs son o’ mine,” the old man used to bawl, in allusion to his son’s long, lank limbs: “Charlie’s a man, but that’s a jack-an-ape. He has no goodnature; there’s nothing handy, nor manly, nor no one turn of a Marston in him.”

And when he was pretty drunk, the old Squire used to swear he should never “sit at the head o’ that board; nor frighten away folk from Gylingden Hall wi’ his d —— d hatchet-face — the black loon!”

“Handsome Charlie was the man for his money. He knew what a horse was, and could sit to his bottle; and the lasses were all clean *mad* about him. He was a Marston every inch of his six foot two.”

Handsome Charlie and he, however, had also had a row or two. The old Squire was free with his horsewhip as with his tongue, and on occasion when neither weapon was quite practicable, had been known to give a fellow “a tap o’ his knuckles.” Handsome Charlie, however, thought there was a period at which personal chastisement should cease; and one night, when the port was flowing, there was some allusion to Marion Hayward, the miller’s daughter, which for some reason the old gentleman did not like. Being “in liquor,” and having clearer ideas about pugilism than self-government, he struck out, to the surprise of all present, at Handsome Charlie. The youth threw back his head scientifically, and nothing followed but the crash of a decanter on the floor. But the old Squire’s blood was up, and he bounced from his chair. Up jumped Handsome Charlie, resolved to stand no nonsense. Drunken Squire Lilbourne, intending to mediate, fell flat on the floor, and cut his ear among the glasses. Handsome Charlie caught the thump which the old Squire discharged at him upon his open hand, and catching him by the cravat, swung him with his back to the wall. They said the old man never looked so purple, nor his eyes so goggle before; and then Handsome Charlie pinioned him tight to the wall by both arms.

"Well, I say — come, don't you talk no more nonsense o' that sort, and I won't lick you," croaked the old Squire. "You stopped that un clever, you did. Didn't he? Come, Charlie, man, gie us your hand, I say, and sit down again, lad." And so the battle ended; and I believe it was the last time the Squire raised his hand to Handsome Charlie.

But those days were over. Old Toby Marston lay cold and quiet enough now, under the drip of the mighty ash-tree within the Saxon ruin where so many of the old Marston race returned to dust, and were forgotten. The weather-stained topboots and leather-breeches, the three-cornered cocked hat to which old gentlemen of that day still clung, and the well-known red waistcoat that reached below his hips, and the fierce pug face of the old Squire, were now but a picture of memory. And the brothers between whom he had planted an irreconcilable quarrel, were now in their new mourning suits, with the gloss still on, debating furiously across the table in the great oak parlour, which had so often resounded to the banter and coarse songs, the oaths and laughter of the congenial neighbours whom the old Squire of Gylingden Hall loved to assemble there.

These young gentlemen, who had grown up in Gylingden Hall, were not accustomed to bridle their tongues, nor, if need be, to hesitate about a blow. Neither had been at the old man's funeral. His death had been sudden. Having been helped to his bed in that hilarious and quarrelsome state which was induced by port and punch, he was found dead in the morning, — his head hanging over the side of the bed, and his face very black and swollen.

Now the Squire's will despoiled his eldest son of Gylingden, which had descended to the heir time out of mind. Scroope Marston was furious. His deep stern voice was heard inveighing against his dead father and living brother, and the heavy thumps on the table with which he enforced his stormy recriminations resounded through the large chamber. Then broke in Charles's rougher voice, and then came a quick alternation of short sentences, and then both voices together in growing loudness and anger, and at last, swelling the tumult, the expostulations of pacific and frightened lawyers, and at last a sudden break up of the conference. Scroope broke out of the room, his pale furious face showing whiter against his long black hair, his dark fierce eyes blazing, his hands clenched, and looking more ungainly and deformed than ever in the convulsions of his fury.

Very violent words must have passed between them; for Charlie, though he was the winning man, was almost as angry as Scroope. The elder brother was for holding possession of the house, and putting his rival to legal process to oust him. But his legal advisers were clearly against it. So, with a heart boiling over with gall, up he went to London, and found the firm who had managed his father's business fair and communicative enough. They looked into the settlements, and found that Gylingden was excepted. It was very odd, but so it was, specially excepted; so that the right of the old Squire to deal with it by his will could not be questioned.

Notwithstanding all this, Scroope, breathing vengeance and aggression, and quite willing to wreck himself provided he could run his brother down, assailed Handsome Charlie, and battered old Squire Toby's will in the Prerogative Court and also at common law, and the feud between the brothers was knit, and every month their exasperation was heightened.

Scroope was beaten, and defeat did not soften him. Charles might have forgiven hard words; but he had been himself worsted during the long campaign in some of those skirmishes, special motions, and so forth, that constitute the episodes of a legal epic like that in which the Marston brothers figured as opposing combatants; and the blight of law costs had touched him, too, with the usual effect upon the temper of a man of embarrassed means.

Years flew, and brought no healing on their wings. On the contrary, the deep corrosion of this hatred bit deeper by time. Neither brother married. But an accident of a different kind befell the younger, Charles Marston, which abridged his enjoyments very materially.

This was a bad fall from his hunter. There were severe fractures, and there was concussion of the brain. For some time it was thought that he could not recover. He disappointed these evil auguries, however. He did recover, but changed in two essential particulars. He had received an injury in his hip, which doomed him never more to sit in the saddle. And the rollicking animal spirits which hitherto had never failed him, had now taken flight for ever.

He had been for five days in a state of coma — absolute insensibility — and when he recovered consciousness he was haunted by an indescribable anxiety.

Tom Cooper, who had been butler in the palmy days of Gylingden Hall, under old Squire Toby, still maintained his post with old-fashioned fidelity, in these days of faded splendour and frugal housekeeping. Twenty years had passed since the death of his old master. He had grown lean, and stooped, and his face, dark with the peculiar brown of age, furrowed and gnarled, and his temper, except with his master, had waxed surly.

His master had visited Bath and Buxton, and came back, as he went, lame, and halting gloomily about with the aid of a stick. When the hunter was sold, the last tradition of the old life at Gylingden disappeared. The young Squire, as he was still called, excluded by his mischance from the hunting-field, dropped into a solitary way of life, and halted slowly and solitarily about the old place, seldom raising his eyes, and with an appearance of indescribable gloom.

Old Cooper could talk freely on occasion with his master; and one day he said, as he handed him his hat and stick in the hall:

"You should rouse yourself up a bit, Master Charles!"

"It's past rousing with me, old Cooper."

"It's just this, I'm thinking: there's something on your mind, and you won't tell no one. There's no good keeping it on your stomach. You'll be a deal lighter if you tell it. Come, now, what is it, Master Charlie?"

The Squire looked with his round grey eyes straight into Cooper's eyes. He felt that there was a sort of spell broken. It was like the old rule of the ghost who can't speak till it is spoken to. He looked earnestly into old Cooper's face for some seconds, and sighed deeply.

"It ain't the first good guess you've made in your day, old Cooper, and I'm glad you've spoke. It's bin on my mind, sure enough, ever since I had that fall. Come in here after me, and shut the door."

The Squire pushed open the door of the oak parlour, and looked round on the pictures abstractedly. He had not been there for some time, and, seating himself on the table, he looked again for a while in Cooper's face before he spoke.

"It's not a great deal, Cooper, but it troubles me, and I would not tell it to the parson nor the doctor; for, God knows what they'd say, though there's nothing to signify in it. But you were always true to the family, and I don't mind if I tell you."

"'Tis as safe with Cooper, Master Charles, as if 'twas locked in a chest, and sunk in a well."

"It's only this," said Charles Marston, looking down on the end of his stick, with which he was tracing lines and circles, "all the time I was lying like dead, as you thought, after that fall, I was with the old master." He raised his eyes to Cooper's again as he spoke, and with an awful oath he repeated—"I was with him, Cooper!"

"He was a good man, sir, in his way," repeated old Cooper, returning his gaze with awe. "He was a good master to me, and a good father to you, and I hope he's happy. May God rest him!"

"Well," said Squire Charles, "it's only this: the whole of that time I was with him, or he was with me — I don't know which. The upshot is, we were together, and I thought I'd never get out of his hands again, and all the time he was bullying me about some one thing; and if it was to save my life, Tom Cooper, by — from the time I waked I never could call to mind what it was; and I think I'd give that hand to know; and if you can think of anything it might be — for God's sake! don't be afraid, Tom Cooper, but speak it out, for he threatened me hard, and it was surely him."

Here ensued a silence.

"And what did you think it might be yourself, Master Charles?" said Cooper.

"I han't thought of aught that's likely. I'll never hit on't — *never*. I thought it might happen he knew something about that d — hump-backed villain, Scroope, that swore before Lawyer Gingham I made away with a paper of settlements — me and father; and, as I hope to be saved, Tom Cooper, there never was a bigger lie! I'd a had the law of him for them identical words, and cast him for more than he's worth; only Lawyer Gingham never goes into nothing for me since money grew scarce in Gylngden; and I can't change my lawyer, I owe him such a hatful of money. But he did, he swore he'd hang me yet for it. He said it in them identical words — he'd never rest till he *hanged* me for it, and I think it was, like enough, something about *that*, the old master was troubled; but it's enough to drive a man mad. I can't bring it to mind — I can't remember a word he said, only he threatened awful, and looked — Lord a mercy on us! — frightful bad."

"There's no need he should. May the Lord a-mercy on him!" said the old butler.

"No, of course; and you're not to tell a soul, Cooper — not a living soul, mind, that I said he looked bad, nor nothing about it."

"God forbid!" said old Cooper, shaking his head. "But I was thinking, sir, it might ha' been about the slight that's bin so long put on him by having no stone over him, and never a scratch o' a chisel to say who he is."

"Ay! Well, I didn't think o' that. Put on your hat, old Cooper, and come down wi' me; for I'll look after that, at any rate."

There is a bye-path leading by a turnstile to the park, and thence to the picturesque old burying-place, which lies in a nook by the roadside, embowered in ancient trees. It was a fine autumnal sunset, and melancholy lights and long shadows spread their peculiar effects over the landscape as "Handsome Charlie" and the old butler made their way slowly toward the place where Handsome Charlie was himself to lie at last.

"Which of the dogs made that howling all last night?" asked the Squire, when they had got on a little way.

"'Twas a strange dog, Master Charlie, in front of the house; ours was all in the yard — a white dog wi' a black head, he looked to be, and he was smelling round them mounting-steps the old master, God be wi' him! set up, the time his knee was bad. When the tyke got up a' top of them, howlin' up at the windows, I'd a liked to shy something at him."

"Hullo! Is that like him?" said the Squire, stopping short, and pointing with his stick at a dirty-white dog, with a large black head, which was scampering round them in a wide circle, half crouching with that air of uncertainty and deprecation which dogs so well know how to assume.

He whistled the dog up. He was a large, half-starved bulldog.

"That fellow has made a long journey — thin as a whipping-post, and stained all over, and his claws worn to the stumps," said the Squire, musingly. "He isn't a bad dog, Cooper. My poor father liked a good bulldog, and knew a cur from a good 'un."

The dog was looking up into the Squire's face with the peculiar grim visage of his kind, and the Squire was thinking irreverently how strong a likeness it presented to the character of his father's fierce pug features when he was clutching his horsewhip and swearing at a keeper.

"If I did right I'd shoot him. He'll worry the cattle, and kill our dogs," said the Squire. "Hey, Cooper? I'll tell the keeper to look after him. That fellow could pull down a sheep, and he shan't live on my mutton."

But the dog was not to be shaken off. He looked wistfully after the Squire, and after they had got a little way on, he followed timidly.

It was vain trying to drive him off. The dog ran round them in wide circles, like the infernal dog in "Faust"; only he left no track of thin flame behind him. These man[oe]uvres were executed with a sort of beseeching air, which flattered and touched the object of this odd preference. So he called him up again, patted him, and then and there in a manner adopted him.

The dog now followed their steps dutifully, as if he had belonged to Handsome Charlie all his days. Cooper unlocked the little iron door, and the dog walked in close behind their heels, and followed them as they visited the roofless chapel.

The Marstons were lying under the floor of this little building in rows. There is not a vault. Each has his distinct grave enclosed in a lining of masonry. Each is surmounted by a stone kist, on the upper flag of which is enclosed his epitaph, except that of poor old Squire Toby. Over him was nothing but the grass and the line of masonry which indicate the site of the kist, whenever his family should afford him one like the rest.

"Well, it does look shabby. It's the elder brother's business; but if he won't, I'll see to it myself, and I'll take care, old boy, to cut sharp and deep in it, that the elder son having refused to lend a hand the stone was put there by the younger."

They strolled round this little burial-ground. The sun was now below the horizon, and the red metallic glow from the clouds, still illuminated by the departed sun, mingled luridly with the twilight. When Charlie peeped again into the little chapel, he saw the ugly dog stretched upon Squire Toby's grave, looking at least twice his natural length, and performing such antics as made the young Squire stare. If you have ever seen a cat stretched on the floor, with a bunch of Valerian, straining, writhing, rubbing its jaws in long-drawn caresses, and in the absorption of a sensual ecstasy, you have seen a phenomenon resembling that which Handsome Charlie witnessed on looking in.

The head of the brute looked so large, its body so long and thin, and its joints so ungainly and dislocated, that the Squire, with old Cooper beside him, looked on with a feeling of disgust and astonishment, which, in a moment or two more, brought the

Squire's stick down upon him with a couple of heavy thumps. The beast awakened from his ecstasy, sprang to the head of the grave, and there on a sudden, thick and bandy as before, confronted the Squire, who stood at its foot, with a terrible grin, and eyes that glared with the peculiar green of canine fury.

The next moment the dog was crouching abjectly at the Squire's feet.

"Well, he's a rum 'un!" said old Cooper, looking hard at him.

"I like him," said the Squire.

"I don't," said Cooper.

"But he shan't come in here again," said the Squire.

"I shouldn't wonder if he was a witch," said old Cooper, who remembered more tales of witchcraft than are now current in that part of the world.

"He's a good dog," said the Squire, dreamily. "I remember the time I'd a given a handful for him — but I'll never be good for nothing again. Come along."

And he stooped down and patted him. So up jumped the dog and looked up in his face, as if watching for some sign, ever so slight, which he might obey.

Cooper did not like a bone in that dog's skin. He could not imagine what his master saw to admire in him. He kept him all night in the gunroom, and the dog accompanied him in his halting rambles about the place. The fonder his master grew of him, the less did Cooper and the other servants like him.

"He hasn't a point of a good dog about him," Cooper would growl. "I think Master Charlie be blind. And old Captain (an old red parrot, who sat chained to a perch in the oak parlour, and conversed with himself, and nibbled at his claws and bit his perch all day), — old Captain, the only living thing, except one or two of us, and the Squire himself, that remembers the old master, the minute he saw the dog, screeched as if he was struck, shakin' his feathers out quite wild, and drops down, poor old soul, a-hangin' by his foot, in a fit."

But there is no accounting for fancies, and the Squire was one of those dogged persons who persist more obstinately in their whims the more they are opposed. But Charles Marston's health suffered by his lameness. The transition from habitual and violent exercise to such a life as his privation now consigned him to, was never made without a risk to health; and a host of dyspeptic annoyances, the existence of which he had never dreamed of before, now beset him in sad earnest. Among these was the now not unfrequent troubling of his sleep with dreams and nightmares. In these his canine favourite invariably had a part and was generally a central, and sometimes a solitary figure. In these visions the dog seemed to stretch himself up the side of the Squire's bed, and in dilated proportions to sit at his feet, with a horrible likeness to the pug features of old Squire Toby, with his tricks of wagging his head and throwing up his chin; and then he would talk to him about Scroope, and tell him "all wasn't straight," and that he "must make it up wi' Scroope," that he, the old Squire, had "served him an ill turn," that "time was nigh up," and that "fair was fair," and he was "troubled where he was, about Scroope."

Then in his dream this semi-human brute would approach his face to his, crawling and crouching up his body, heavy as lead, till the face of the beast was laid on his, with the same odious caresses and stretchings and writhings which he had seen over the old Squire's grave. Then Charlie would wake up with a gasp and a howl, and start upright in the bed, bathed in a cold moisture, and fancy he saw something white sliding off the foot of the bed. Sometimes he thought it might be the curtain with white lining that slipped down, or the coverlet disturbed by his uneasy turnings; but he always fancied, at such moments, that he saw something white sliding hastily off the bed; and always when he had been visited by such dreams the dog next morning was more than usually caressing and servile, as if to obliterate, by a more than ordinary welcome, the sentiment of disgust which the horror of the night had left behind it.

The doctor half-satisfied the Squire that there was nothing in these dreams, which, in one shape or another, invariably attended forms of indigestion such as he was suffering from.

For a while, as if to corroborate this theory, the dog ceased altogether to figure in them. But at last there came a vision in which, more unpleasantly than before, he did resume his old place.

In his nightmare the room seemed all but dark; he heard what he knew to be the dog walking from the door round his bed slowly, to the side from which he always had come upon it. A portion of the room was uncarpeted, and he said he distinctly heard the peculiar tread of a dog, in which the faint clatter of the claws is audible. It was a light stealthy step, but at every tread the whole room shook heavily; he felt something place itself at the foot of his bed, and saw a pair of green eyes staring at him in the dark, from which he could not remove his own. Then he heard, as he thought, the old Squire Toby say — "The eleventh hour be passed, Charlie, and ye've done nothing — you and I 'a done Scroope a wrong!" and then came a good deal more, and then — "The time's nigh up, it's going to strike." And with a long low growl, the thing began to creep up upon his feet; the growl continued, and he saw the reflection of the upturned green eyes upon the bedclothes, as it began slowly to stretch itself up his body towards his face. With a loud scream, he waked. The light, which of late the Squire was accustomed to have in his bedroom, had accidentally gone out. He was afraid to get up, or even to look about the room for some time; so sure did he feel of seeing the green eyes in the dark fixed on him from some corner. He had hardly recovered from the first agony which nightmare leaves behind it, and was beginning to collect his thoughts, when he heard the clock strike twelve. And he bethought him of the words "the eleventh hour be passed — time's nigh up — it's going to strike!" and he almost feared that he would hear the voice reopening the subject.

Next morning the Squire came down looking ill.

"Do you know a room, old Cooper," said he, "they used to call King Herod's Chamber?"

"Ay, sir; the story of King Herod was on the walls o't when I was a boy."

"There's a closet off it — is there?"

"I can't be sure o' that; but 't isn't worth your looking at, now; the hangings was rotten, and took off the walls, before you was born; and there's nou't there but some old broken things and lumber. I seed them put there myself by poor Twinks; he was blind of an eye, and footman afterwards. You'll remember Twinks? He died here, about the time o' the great snow. There was a deal o' work to bury him, poor fellow!"

"Get the key, old Cooper; I'll look at the room," said the Squire.

"And what the devil can you want to look at it for?" said Cooper, with the old-world privilege of a rustic butler.

"And what the devil's that to you? But I don't mind if I tell you. I don't want that dog in the gunroom, and I'll put him somewhere else; and I don't care if I put him there."

"A bulldog in a bedroom! Oons, sir! the folks 'ill say you're clean mad!"

"Well, let them; get you the key, and let us look at the room."

"You'd shoot him if you did right, Master Charlie. You never heard what a noise he kept up all last night in the gunroom, walking to and fro growling like a tiger in a show; and, say what you like, the dog's not worth his feed; he hasn't a point of a dog; he's a bad dog."

"I know a dog better than you — and he's a good dog!" said the Squire, testily.

"If you was a judge of a dog you'd hang that 'un," said Cooper.

"I'm not a-going to hang him, so there's an end. Go you, and get the key; and don't be talking, mind, when you go down. I may change my mind."

Now this freak of visiting King Herod's room had, in truth, a totally different object from that pretended by the Squire. The voice in his nightmare had uttered a particular direction, which haunted him, and would give him no peace until he had tested it. So far from liking that dog to-day, he was beginning to regard it with a horrible suspicion; and if old Cooper had not stirred his obstinate temper by seeming to dictate, I dare say he would have got rid of that inmate effectually before evening.

Up to the third storey, long disused, he and old Cooper mounted. At the end of a dusty gallery, the room lay. The old tapestry, from which the spacious chamber had taken its name, had long given place to modern paper, and this was mildewed, and in some places hanging from the walls. A thick mantle of dust lay over the floor. Some broken chairs and boards, thick with dust, lay, along with other lumber, piled together at one end of the room.

They entered the closet, which was quite empty. The Squire looked round, and you could hardly have said whether he was relieved or disappointed.

"No furniture here," said the Squire, and looked through the dusty window. "Did you say anything to me lately — I don't mean this morning — about this room, or the closet — or anything — I forget—"

"Lor' bless you! Not I. I han't been thinkin' o' this room this forty year."

"Is there any sort of old furniture called a *buffet* — do you remember?" asked the Squire.

"A buffet? why, yes — to be sure — there was a buffet, sure enough, in this closet, now you bring it to my mind," said Cooper. "But it's papered over."

"And what is it?"

"A little cupboard in the wall," answered the old man.

"Ho — I see — and there's such a thing here, is there, under the paper? Show me whereabouts it was."

"Well — I think it was somewhere about here," answered he, rapping his knuckles along the wall opposite the window. "Ay, there it is," he added, as the hollow sound of a wooden door was returned to his knock.

The Squire pulled the loose paper from the wall, and disclosed the doors of a small press, about two feet square, fixed in the wall.

"The very thing for my buckles and pistols, and the rest of my gimcracks," said the Squire. "Come away, we'll leave the dog where he is. Have you the key of that little press?"

No, he had not. The old master had emptied and locked it up, and desired that it should be papered over, and that was the history of it.

Down came the Squire, and took a strong turnscREW from his gun-case; and quietly he reascended to King Herod's room, and, with little trouble, forced the door of the small press in the closet wall. There were in it some letters and cancelled leases, and also a parchment deed which he took to the window and read with much agitation. It was a supplemental deed executed about a fortnight after the others, and previously to his father's marriage, placing Gylingden under strict settlement to the elder son, in what is called "tail male." Handsome Charlie, in his fraternal litigation, had acquired a smattering of technical knowledge, and he perfectly well knew that the effect of this would be not only to transfer the house and lands to his brother Scroope, but to leave him at the mercy of that exasperated brother, who might recover from him personally every guinea he had ever received by way of rent, from the date of his father's death.

It was a dismal, clouded day, with something threatening in its aspect, and the darkness, where he stood, was made deeper by the top of one of the huge old trees overhanging the window.

In a state of awful confusion he attempted to think over his position. He placed the deed in his pocket, and nearly made up his mind to destroy it. A short time ago he would not have hesitated for a moment under such circumstances; but now his health and his nerves were shattered, and he was under a supernatural alarm which the strange discovery of this deed had powerfully confirmed.

In this state of profound agitation he heard a sniffing at the closet-door, and then an impatient scratch and a long low growl. He screwed his courage up, and, not knowing what to expect, threw the door open and saw the dog, not in his dream-shape, but wriggling with joy, and crouching and fawning with eager submission; and then wandering about the closet, the brute growled awfully into the corners of it, and seemed in an unappeasable agitation.

Then the dog returned and fawned and crouched again at his feet.

After the first moment was over, the sensations of abhorrence and fear began to subside, and he almost reproached himself for requiting the affection of this poor friendless brute with the antipathy which he had really done nothing to earn.

The dog pattered after him down the stairs. Oddly enough, the sight of this animal, after the first revulsion, reassured him; it was, in his eyes, so attached, so goodnatured, and palpably so mere a dog.

By the hour of evening the Squire had resolved on a middle course; he would not inform his brother of his discovery, nor yet would he destroy the deed. He would never marry. He was past that time. He would leave a letter, explaining the discovery of the deed, addressed to the only surviving trustee — who had probably forgotten everything about it — and having seen out his own

tenure, he would provide that all should be set right after his death. Was not that fair? at all events it quite satisfied what he called his conscience, and he thought it a devilish good compromise for his brother; and he went out, towards sunset, to take his usual walk.

Returning in the darkening twilight, the dog, as usual attending him, began to grow frisky and wild, at first scampering round him in great circles, as before, nearly at the top of his speed, his great head between his paws as he raced. Gradually more excited grew the pace and narrower his circuit, louder and fiercer his continuous growl, and the Squire stopped and grasped his stick hard, for the lurid eyes and grin of the brute threatened an attack. Turning round and round as the excited brute encircled him, and striking vainly at him with his stick, he grew at last so tired that he almost despaired of keeping him longer at bay; when on a sudden the dog stopped short and crawled up to his feet wriggling and crouching submissively.

Nothing could be more apologetic and abject; and when the Squire dealt him two heavy thumps with his stick, the dog whimpered only, and writhed and licked his feet. The Squire sat down on a prostrate tree; and his dumb companion, recovering his wonted spirits immediately, began to sniff and nuzzle among the roots. The Squire felt in his breastpocket for the deed — it was safe; and again he pondered, in this loneliest of spots, on the question whether he should preserve it for restoration after his death to his brother, or destroy it forthwith. He began rather to lean toward the latter solution, when the long low growl of the dog not far off startled him.

He was sitting in a melancholy grove of old trees, that slants gently westward. Exactly the same odd effect of light I have before described — a faint red glow reflected downward from the upper sky, after the sun had set, now gave to the growing darkness a lurid uncertainty. This grove, which lies in a gentle hollow, owing to its circumscribed horizon on all but one side, has a peculiar character of loneliness.

He got up and peeped over a sort of barrier, accidentally formed of the trunks of felled trees laid one over the other, and saw the dog straining up the other side of it, and hideously stretched out, his ugly head looking in consequence twice the natural size. His dream was coming over him again. And now between the trunks the brute's ungainly head was thrust, and the long neck came straining through, and the body, twining after it like a huge white lizard; and as it came striving and twisting through, it growled and glared as if it would devour him.

As swiftly as his lameness would allow, the Squire hurried from this solitary spot towards the house. What thoughts exactly passed through his mind as he did so, I am sure he could not have told. But when the dog came up with him it seemed appeased, and even in high goodhumour, and no longer resembled the brute that haunted his dreams.

That night, near ten o'clock, the Squire, a good deal agitated, sent for the keeper, and told him that he believed the dog was mad, and that he must shoot him. He might shoot the dog in the gunroom, where he was — a grain of shot or two in the wainscot did not matter, and the dog must not have a chance of getting out.

The Squire gave the gamekeeper his double-barrelled gun, loaded with heavy shot. He did not go with him beyond the hall. He placed his hand on the keeper's arm; the keeper said his hand trembled, and that he looked "as white as curds."

"Listen a bit!" said the Squire under his breath.

They heard the dog in a state of high excitement in the room — growling ominously, jumping on the window-stool and down again, and running round the room.

"You'll need to be sharp, mind — don't give him a chance — slip in edgeways, d'ye see? and give him both barrels!"

"Not the first mad dog I've knocked over, sir," said the man, looking very serious as he cocked the gun.

As the keeper opened the door, the dog had sprung into the empty grate. He said he "never see sich a stark, staring devil." The beast made a twist round, as if, he thought, to jump up the chimney — "but that wasn't to be done at no price," — and he made a yell — not like a dog — like a man caught in a mill-crank, and before he could spring at the keeper, he fired one barrel into him. The dog leaped towards him, and rolled over, receiving the second barrel in his head, as he lay snorting at the keeper's feet!

"I never seed the like; I never heard a screech like that!" said the keeper, recoiling. "It makes a fellow feel queer."

"Quite dead?" asked the Squire.

"Not a stir in him, sir," said the man, pulling him along the floor by the neck.

"Throw him outside the hall-door now," said the Squire; "and mind you pitch him outside the gate tonight — old Cooper says he's a witch," and the pale Squire smiled, "so he shan't lie in Gylingden."

Never was man more relieved than the Squire, and he slept better for a week after this than he had done for many weeks before.

It behoves us all to act promptly on our good resolutions. There is a determined gravitation towards evil, which, if left to itself, will bear down first intentions. If at one moment of superstitious fear, the Squire had made up his mind to a great sacrifice, and resolved in the matter of that deed so strangely recovered, to act honestly by his brother, that resolution very soon gave place to the compromise with fraud, which so conveniently postponed the restitution to the period when further enjoyment on his part was impossible. Then came more tidings of Scroope's violent and minatory language, with always the same burthen — that he would leave no stone unturned to show that there had existed a deed which Charles had either secreted or destroyed, and that he would never rest till he had hanged him.

This of course was wild talk. At first it had only enraged him; but, with his recent guilty knowledge and suppression, had come fear. His danger was the existence of the deed, and little by little he brought himself to a resolution to destroy it. There were many falterings and recoils before he could bring himself to commit this crime. At length, however, he did it, and got rid of the custody of that which at any time might become the instrument of disgrace and ruin. There was relief in this, but also the new and terrible sense of actual guilt.

He had got pretty well rid of his supernatural qualms. It was a different kind of trouble that agitated him now.

But this night, he imagined, he was awakened by a violent shaking of his bed. He could see, in the very imperfect light, two figures at the foot of it, holding each a bedpost. One of these he half-fancied was his brother Scroope, but the other was the old Squire — of that he was sure — and he fancied that they had shaken him up from his sleep. Squire Toby was talking as Charlie awakened, and he heard him say:

"Put out of our own house by you! It won't hold for long. We'll come in together, friendly, and stay. Forewarned, wi' yer eyes open, ye did it; and now Scroope'll hang you! We'll hang you together! Look at me, you devil's limb."

And the old Squire tremblingly stretched his face, torn with shot and bloody, and growing every moment more and more into the likeness of the dog, and began to stretch himself out and climb the bed over the foot-board; and he saw the figure at the other side, little more than a black shadow, begin also to scale the bed; and there was instantly a dreadful confusion and uproar in the room, and such a gabbling and laughing; he could not catch the words; but, with a scream, he woke, and found himself standing on the floor. The phantoms and the clamour were gone, but a crash and ringing of fragments was in his ears. The great china bowl, from which for generations the Marstons of Gylingden had been baptized, had fallen from the mantelpiece, and was smashed on the hearthstone.

"I've bin dreamin' all night about Mr. Scroope, and I wouldn't wonder, old Cooper, if he was dead," said the Squire, when he came down in the morning.

"God forbid! I was adreamed about him, too, sir: I dreamed he was dammin' and sinkin' about a hole was burnt in his coat, and the old master, God be wi' him! said — quite plain — I'd 'a swore 'twas himself— 'Cooper, get up, ye d — d land-loupin' thief, and lend a hand to hang him — for he's a daft cur, and no dog o' mine.' 'Twas the dog shot over night, I do suppose, as was runnin' in my old head. I thought old master gied me a punch wi' his knuckles, and says I, wakenin' up, 'At yer service, sir'; and for a while I couldn't get it out o' my head, master was in the room still."

Letters from town soon convinced the Squire that his brother Scroope, so far from being dead, was particularly active; and Charlie's attorney wrote to say, in serious alarm, that he had heard, accidentally, that he intended setting up a case, of a supplementary deed of settlement, of which he had secondary evidence, which would give him Gylingden. And at this menace Handsome Charlie snapped his fingers, and wrote courageously to his attorney; abiding what might follow with, however, a secret foreboding.

Scroope threatened loudly now, and swore after his bitter fashion, and reiterated his old promise of hanging that cheat at last. In the midst of these menaces and preparations, however, a sudden peace proclaimed itself: Scroope died, without time even to make provisions for a posthumous attack upon his brother. It was one of those cases of disease of the heart in which death is as sudden as by a bullet.

Charlie's exultation was undisguised. It was shocking. Not, of course, altogether malignant. For there was the expansion consequent on the removal of a secret fear. There was also the comic piece of luck, that only the day before Scroope had destroyed his old will, which left to a stranger every farthing he possessed, intending in a day or two to execute another to the same person, charged with the express condition of prosecuting the suit against Charlie.

The result was, that all his possessions went unconditionally to his brother Charles as his heir. Here were grounds for abundance of savage elation. But there was also the deep-seated hatred of half a life of mutual and persistent aggression and revilings; and Handsome Charlie was capable of nursing a grudge, and enjoying a revenge with his whole heart.

He would gladly have prevented his brother's being buried in the old Gylingden chapel, where he wished to lie; but his lawyers doubted his power, and he was not quite proof against the scandal which would attend his turning back the funeral, which would, he knew, be attended by some of the country gentry and others, with an hereditary regard for the Marstons.

But he warned his servants that not one of them were to attend it; promising, with oaths and curses not to be disregarded, that any one of them who did so, should find the door shut in his face on his return.

I don't think, with the exception of old Cooper, that the servants cared for this prohibition, except as it baulked a curiosity always strong in the solitude of the country. Cooper was very much vexed that the eldest son of the old Squire should be buried in the old family chapel, and no sign of decent respect from Gylingden Hall. He asked his master, whether he would not, at least, have some wine and refreshments in the oak parlour, in case any of the country gentlemen who paid this respect to the old family should come up to the house? But the Squire only swore at him, told him to mind his own business, and ordered him to say, if such a thing happened, that he was out, and no preparations made, and, in fact, to send them away as they came. Cooper expostulated stoutly, and the Squire grew angrier; and after a tempestuous scene, took his hat and stick and walked out, just as the funeral descending the valley from the direction of the "Old Angel Inn" came in sight.

Old Cooper prowled about disconsolately, and counted the carriages as well as he could from the gate. When the funeral was over, and they began to drive away, he returned to the hall, the door of which lay open, and as usual deserted. Before he reached it quite, a mourning coach drove up, and two gentlemen in black cloaks, and with crapes to their hats, got out, and without looking to the right or the left, went up the steps into the house. Cooper followed them slowly. The carriage had, he supposed, gone round to the yard, for, when he reached the door, it was no longer there.

So he followed the two mourners into the house. In the hall he found a fellow-servant, who said he had seen two gentlemen, in black cloaks, pass through the hall, and go up the stairs without removing their hats, or asking leave of anyone. This was very odd, old Cooper thought, and a great liberty; so upstairs he went to make them out.

But he could not find them then, nor ever. And from that hour the house was troubled.

In a little time there was not one of the servants who had not something to tell. Steps and voices followed them sometimes in the passages, and tittering whispers, always minatory, scared them at corners of the galleries, or from dark recesses; so that they would return panic-stricken to be rebuked by thin Mrs. Beckett, who looked on such stories as worse than idle. But Mrs Beckett herself, a short time after, took a very different view of the matter.

She had herself begun to hear these voices, and with this formidable aggravation, that they came always when she was at her prayers, which she had been punctual in saying all her life, and utterly interrupted them. She was scared at such moments by dropping words and sentences, which grew, as she persisted, into threats and blasphemies.

These voices were not always in the room. They called, as she fancied, through the walls, very thick in that old house, from the neighbouring apartments, sometimes on one side, sometimes on the other; sometimes they seemed to holloa from distant lobbies, and came muffled, but threateningly, through the long panelled passages. As they approached they grew furious, as if several voices were speaking together. Whenever, as I said, this worthy woman applied herself to her devotions, these horrible

sentences came hurrying towards the door, and, in panic, she would start from her knees, and all then would subside except the thumping of her heart against her stays, and the dreadful tremors of her nerves.

What these voices said, Mrs. Beckett never could quite remember one minute after they had ceased speaking; one sentence chased another away; gibe and menace and impious denunciation, each hideously articulate, were lost as soon as heard. And this added to the effect of these terrifying mockeries and invectives, that she could not, by any effort, retain their exact import, although their horrible character remained vividly present to her mind.

For a long time the Squire seemed to be the only person in the house absolutely unconscious of these annoyances. Mrs. Beckett had twice made up her mind within the week to leave. A prudent woman, however, who has been comfortable for more than twenty years in a place, thinks oftener than twice before she leaves it. She and old Cooper were the only servants in the house who remembered the good old housekeeping in Squire Toby's day. The others were few, and such as could hardly be accounted regular servants. Meg Dobbs, who acted as housemaid, would not sleep in the house, but walked home, in trepidation, to her father's, at the gatehouse, under the escort of her little brother, every night. Old Mrs. Beckett, who was high and mighty with the make-shift servants of fallen Gylingden, let herself down all at once, and made Mrs. Kymes and the kitchenmaid move their beds into her large and faded room, and there, very frankly, shared her nightly terrors with them.

Old Cooper was testy and captious about these stories. He was already uncomfortable enough by reason of the entrance of the two muffled figures into the house, about which there could be no mistake. His own eyes had seen them. He refused to credit the stories of the women, and affected to think that the two mourners might have left the house and driven away, on finding no one to receive them.

Old Cooper was summoned at night to the oak parlour, where the Squire was smoking.

"I say, Cooper," said the Squire, looking pale and angry, "what for ha' you been frightenin' they crazy women wi' your plaguy stories? d — me, if you see ghosts here it's no place for you, and it's time you should pack. I won't be left without servants. Here has been old Beckett, wi' the cook and the kitchenmaid, as white as pipeclay, all in a row, to tell me I must have a parson to sleep among them, and preach down the devil! Upon my soul, you're a wise old body, filling their heads wi' maggots! and Meg goes down to the lodge every night, afeared to lie in the house — all your doing, wi' your old wives' stories, — ye withered old Tom o' Bedlam!"

"I'm not to blame, Master Charles. 'Tisn't along o' no stories o' mine, for I'm never done tellin' 'em it's all vanity and vapours. Mrs. Beckett 'ill tell you that, and there's been many a wry word betwixt us on the head o't. Whate'er I may *think*," said old Cooper, significantly, and looking askance, with the sternness of fear in the Squire's face.

The Squire averted his eyes, and muttered angrily to himself, and turned away to knock the ashes out of his pipe on the hob, and then turning suddenly round upon Cooper again, he spoke, with a pale face, but not quite so angrily as before.

"I know you're no fool, old Cooper, when you like. Suppose there was such a thing as a ghost here, don't you see, it ain't to them snipe-headed women it 'id go to tell its story. What ails you, man, that you should think aught about it, but just what I think? You had a good headpiece o' yer own once, Cooper, don't be you clappin' a gooscap over it, as my poor father used to say; d — it, old boy, you mustn't let 'em be fools, settin' one another wild wi' their blether, and makin' the folk talk what they shouldn't, about Gylingden and the family. I don't think ye'd like that, old Cooper, I'm sure ye wouldn't. The women has gone out o' the kitchen, make up a bit o' fire, and get your pipe. I'll go to you, when I finish this one, and we'll smoke a bit together, and a glass o' brandy and water."

Down went the old butler, not altogether unused to such condescensions in that disorderly and lonely household; and let not those who can choose their company, be too hard on the Squire who couldn't.

When he had got things tidy, as he said, he sat down in that big old kitchen, with his feet on the fender, the kitchen candle burning in a great brass candlestick, which stood on the deal table at his elbow, with the brandy bottle and tumblers beside it, and Cooper's pipe also in readiness. And these preparations completed, the old butler, who had remembered other generations and better times, fell into rumination, and so, gradually, into a deep sleep.

Old Cooper was half awakened by some one laughing low, near his head. He was dreaming of old times in the Hall, and fancied one of "the young gentlemen" going to play him a trick, and he mumbled something in his sleep, from which he was awakened by a stern deep voice, saying, "You wern't at the funeral; I might take your life, I'll take your ear." At the same moment, the side of his head received a violent push, and he started to his feet. The fire had gone down, and he was chilled. The candle was expiring in the socket, and threw on the white wall long shadows, that danced up and down from the ceiling to the ground, and their black outlines he fancied resembled the two men in cloaks, whom he remembered with a profound horror.

He took the candle, with all the haste he could, getting along the passage, on whose walls the same dance of black shadows was continued, very anxious to reach his room before the light should go out. He was startled half out of his wits by the sudden clang of his master's bell, close over his head, ringing furiously.

"Ha, ha! There it goes — yes, sure enough," said Cooper, reassuring himself with the sound of his own voice, as he hastened on, hearing more and more distinct every moment the same furious ringing. "He's fell asleep, like me; that's it, and his lights is out, I lay you fifty —"

When he turned the handle of the door of the oak parlour, the Squire wildly called, "Who's *there*?" in the tone of a man who expects a robber.

"It's me, old Cooper, all right, Master Charlie, you didn't come to the kitchen after all, sir."

"I'm very bad, Cooper; I don't know how I've been. Did you meet anything?" asked the Squire.

"No," said Cooper.

They stared on one another.

"Come here — stay here! Don't you leave me! Look round the room, and say is all right; and gie us your hand, old Cooper, for I must hold it." The Squire's was damp and cold, and trembled very much. It was not very far from daybreak now.

After a time he spoke again: "I'a done many a thing I shouldn't; I'm not fit to go, and wi' God's blessin' I'll look to it — why shouldn't I? I'm as lame as old Billy — I'll never be able to do any good no more, and I'll give over drinking, and marry, as I ought to 'a done long ago — none o' yer fine ladies, but a good homely wench; there's Farmer Crump's youngest daughter, a

good lass, and discreet. What for shouldn't I take her? She'd take care o' me, and wouldn't bring a head full o' romances here, and mantua-makers' trumpery, and I'll talk with the parson, and I'll do what's fair wi' everyone; and mind, I said I'm sorry for many a thing I 'a done."

A wild cold dawn had by this time broken. The Squire, Cooper said, looked "awful bad," as he got his hat and stick, and sallied out for a walk, instead of going to his bed, as Cooper besought him, looking so wild and distracted, that it was plain his object was simply to escape from the house. It was twelve o'clock when the Squire walked into the kitchen, where he was sure of finding some of the servants, looking as if ten years had passed over him since yesterday. He pulled a stool by the fire, without speaking a word, and sat down. Cooper had sent to Applebury for the doctor, who had just arrived, but the Squire would not go to him. "If he wants to see me, he may come here," he muttered as often as Cooper urged him. So the doctor did come, charily enough, and found the Squire very much worse than he had expected.

The Squire resisted the order to get to his bed. But the doctor insisted under a threat of death, at which his patient quailed.

"Well, I'll do what you say — only this — you must let old Cooper and Dick Keeper stay wi' me. I mustn't be left alone, and they must keep awake o' nights; and stay a while, do *you*. When I get round a bit, I'll go and live in a town. It's dull livin' here, now that I can't do nou't, as I used, and I'll live a better life, mind ye; ye heard me say that, and I don't care who laughs, and I'll talk wi' the parson. I like 'em to laugh, hang 'em, it's a sign I'm doin' right, at last."

The doctor sent a couple of nurses from the County Hospital, not choosing to trust his patient to the management he had selected, and he went down himself to Gylingden to meet them in the evening. Old Cooper was ordered to occupy the dressing-room, and sit up at night, which satisfied the Squire, who was in a strangely excited state, very low, and threatened, the doctor said, with fever.

The clergyman came, an old, gentle, "book-learned" man, and talked and prayed with him late that evening. After he had gone the Squire called the nurses to his bedside, and said:

"There's a fellow sometimes comes; you'll never mind him. He looks in at the door and beckons, — a thin, hump-backed chap in mourning, wi' black gloves on; ye'll know him by his lean face, as brown as the wainscot: don't ye mind his smilin'. You don't go out to him, nor ask him in; he won't say nout; and if he grows anger'd and looks awry at ye, don't ye be afeared, for he can't hurt ye, and he'll grow tired waitin', and go away; and for God's sake mind ye don't ask him in, nor go out after him!"

The nurses put their heads together when this was over, and held afterwards a whispering conference with old Cooper. "Law bless ye! — no, there's no madman in the house," he protested; "not a soul but what ye saw, — it's just a trifle o' the fever in his head — no more."

The Squire grew worse as the night wore on. He was heavy and delirious, talking of all sorts of things — of wine, and dogs, and lawyers; and then he began to talk, as it were, to his brother Scroope. As he did so, Mrs. Oliver, the nurse, who was sitting up alone with him, heard, as she thought, a hand softly laid on the door-handle outside, and a stealthy attempt to turn it. "Lord bless us! who's there?" she cried, and her heart jumped into her mouth, as she thought of the hump-backed man in black, who was to put in his head smiling and beckoning — "Mr. Cooper! sir! are you there?" she cried. "Come here, Mr. Cooper, please — do, sir, quick!"

Old Cooper, called up from his doze by the fire, stumbled in from the dressing-room, and Mrs. Oliver seized him tightly as he emerged.

"The man with the hump has been atryin' the door, Mr. Cooper, as sure as I am here." The Squire was moaning and mumbling in his fever, understanding nothing, as she spoke. "No, no! Mrs. Oliver, ma'am, it's impossible, for there's no sich man in the house: what is Master Charlie sayin'?"

"He's saying *Scroope* every minute, whatever he means by that, and — and — hisht! — listen — there's the handle again," and, with a loud scream, she added — "Look at his head and neck in at the door!" and in her tremour she strained old Cooper in an agonizing embrace.

The candle was flaring, and there was a wavering shadow at the door that looked like the head of a man with a long neck, and a longish sharp nose, peeping in and drawing back.

"Don't be a d — fool, ma'am!" cried Cooper, very white, and shaking her with all his might. "It's only the candle, I tell you — nothing in life but that. Don't you see?" and he raised the light; "and I'm sure there was no one at the door, and I'll try, if you let me go."

The other nurse was asleep on a sofa, and Mrs. Oliver called her up in a panic, for company, as old Cooper opened the door. There was no one near it, but at the angle of the gallery was a shadow resembling that which he had seen in the room. He raised the candle a little, and it seemed to beckon with a long hand as the head drew back. "Shadow from the candle!" exclaimed Cooper aloud, resolved not to yield to Mrs. Oliver's panic; and, candle in hand, he walked to the corner. There was nothing. He could not forbear peeping down the long gallery from this point, and as he moved the light, he saw precisely the same sort of shadow, a little further down, and as he advanced the same withdrawal, and beckon. "Gammon!" said he; "it is nout but the candle." And on he went, growing half angry and half frightened at the persistency with which this ugly shadow — a literal shadow he was sure it was — presented itself. As he drew near the point where it now appeared, it seemed to collect itself, and nearly dissolve in the central panel of an old carved cabinet which he was now approaching.

In the centre panel of this is a sort of boss carved into a wolf's head. The light fell oddly upon this, and the fugitive shadow seemed to be breaking up, and rearranging itself as oddly. The eyeball gleamed with a point of reflected light, which glittered also upon the grinning mouth, and he saw the long, sharp nose of Scroope Marston, and his fierce eye looking at him, he thought, with a steadfast meaning.

Old Cooper stood gazing upon this sight, unable to move, till he saw the face, and the figure that belonged to it, begin gradually to emerge from the wood. At the same time he heard voices approaching rapidly up a side gallery, and Cooper, with a loud "Lord a-mercy on us!" turned and ran back again, pursued by a sound that seemed to shake the old house like a mighty gust of wind.

Into his master's room burst old Cooper, half wild with fear, and clapped the door and turned the key in a twinkling, looking as if he had been pursued by murderers.

"Did you hear it?" whispered Cooper, now standing near the dressing-room door. They all listened, but not a sound from without disturbed the utter stillness of night. "God bless us! I doubt it's my old head that's gone crazy!" exclaimed Cooper.

He would tell them nothing but that he was himself "an old fool," to be frightened by their talk, and that "the rattle of a window, or the dropping o' a pin" was enough to scare him now; and so he helped himself through that night with brandy, and sat up talking by his master's fire.

The Squire recovered slowly from his brain fever, but not perfectly. A very little thing, the doctor said, would suffice to upset him. He was not yet sufficiently strong to remove for change of scene and air, which were necessary for his complete restoration.

Cooper slept in the dressing-room, and was now his only nightly attendant. The ways of the invalid were odd: he liked, half sitting up in his bed, to smoke his churchwarden o' nights, and made old Cooper smoke, for company, at the fireside. As the Squire and his humble friend indulged in it, smoking is a taciturn pleasure, and it was not until the Master of Gylingden had finished his third pipe that he essayed conversation, and when he did, the subject was not such as Cooper would have chosen.

"I say, old Cooper, look in my face, and don't be afeared to speak out," said the Squire, looking at him with a steady, cunning smile; "you know all this time, as well as I do, who's in the house. You needn't deny — hey? — Scroope and my father?"

"Don't you be talking like that, Charlie," said old Cooper, rather sternly and frightened, after a long silence; still looking in his face, which did not change.

"What's the good o' shammin', Cooper? Scroope's took the hearin' o' yer right ear — you know he did. He's looking angry. He's nigh took my life wi' this fever. But he's not done wi' me yet, and he looks awful wicked. Ye saw him — ye know ye did."

Cooper was awfully frightened, and the odd smile on the Squire's lips frightened him still more. He dropped his pipe, and stood gazing in silence at his master, and feeling as if he were in a dream.

"If ye think so, ye should not be smiling like that," said Cooper, grimly.

"I'm tired, Cooper, and it's as well to smile as t'other thing; so I'll even smile while I can. You know what they mean to do wi' me. That's all I wanted to say. Now, lad, go on wi' yer pipe — I'm goin' asleep."

So the Squire turned over in his bed, and lay down serenely, with his head on the pillow. Old Cooper looked at him, and glanced at the door, and then half-filled his tumbler with brandy, and drank it off, and felt better, and got to his bed in the dressing-room.

In the dead of night he was suddenly awakened by the Squire, who was standing, in his dressing-gown and slippers, by his bed.

"I've brought you a bit o' a present. I got the rents o' Hazelden yesterday, and ye'll keep that for yourself — it's a fifty — and give t' other to Nelly Carwell, tomorrow; I'll sleep the sounder; and I saw Scroope since; he's not such a bad 'un after all, old fellow! He's got a crape over his face — for I told him I couldn't bear it; and I'd do many a thing for him now. I never could stand shilly-shally. Goodnight, old Cooper!"

And the Squire laid his trembling hand kindly on the old man's shoulder, and returned to his own room. "I don't half like how he is. Doctor don't come half often enough. I don't like that queer smile o' his, and his hand was as cold as death. I hope in God his brain's not aturnin'!"

With these reflections, he turned to the pleasanter subject of his present, and at last fell asleep.

In the morning, when he went into the Squire's room, the Squire had left his bed. "Never mind; he'll come back, like a bad shillin'," thought old Cooper, preparing the room as usual. But he did not return. Then began an uneasiness, succeeded by a panic, when it began to be plain that the Squire was not in the house. What had become of him? None of his clothes, but his dressing-gown and slippers, were missing. Had he left the house, in his present sickly state, in that garb? and, if so, could he be in his right senses; and was there a chance of his surviving a cold, damp night, so passed, in the open air?

Tom Edwards was up to the house, and told them, that, walking a mile or so that morning, at four o'clock — there being no moon — along with Farmer Nokes, who was driving his cart to market, in the dark, three men walked, in front of the horse, not twenty yards before them, all the way from near Gylingden Lodge to the burial-ground, the gate of which was opened for them from within, and the three men entered, and the gate was shut. Tom Edwards thought they were gone in to make preparation for a funeral of some member of the Marston family. But the occurrence seemed to Cooper, who knew there was no such thing, horribly ominous.

He now commenced a careful search, and at last bethought him of the lonely upper storey, and King Herod's chamber. He saw nothing changed there, but the closet door was shut, and, dark as was the morning, something, like a large white knot sticking out over the door, caught his eye.

The door resisted his efforts to open it for a time; some great weight forced it down against the floor; at length, however, it did yield a little, and a heavy crash, shaking the whole floor, and sending an echo flying through all the silent corridors, with a sound like receding laughter, half stunned him.

When he pushed open the door, his master was lying dead upon the floor. His cravat was drawn halter-wise tight round his throat, and had done its work well. The body was cold, and had been long dead.

In due course the coroner held his inquest, and the jury pronounced, "that the deceased, Charles Marston, had died by his own hand, in a state of temporary insanity." But old Cooper had his own opinion about the Squire's death, though his lips were sealed, and he never spoke about it. He went and lived for the residue of his days in York, where there are still people who remember him, a taciturn and surly old man, who attended church regularly, and also drank a little, and was known to have saved some money.

THE WHITE CAT OF DRUMGUNNIOL

Anonymous in *All the Year Round* (1869-70).

There is a famous story of a white cat, with which we all become acquainted in the nursery. I am going to tell a story of a white cat very different from the amiable and enchanted princess who took that disguise for a season. The white cat of which I speak was a more sinister animal.

The traveller from Limerick toward Dublin, after passing the hills of Killaloe upon the left, as Keeper Mountain rises high in view, finds himself gradually hemmed in, up the right, by a range of lower hills. An undulating plain that dips gradually to a lower level than that of the road interposes, and some scattered hedgerows relieve its somewhat wild and melancholy character.

One of the few human habitations that send up their films of turf-smoke from that lonely plain, is the loosely-thatched, earth-built dwelling of a "strong farmer," as the more prosperous of the tenant-farming classes are termed in Munster. It stands in a clump of trees near the edge of a wandering stream, about halfway between the mountains and the Dublin road, and had been for generations tenanted by people named Donovan.

In a distant place, desirous of studying some Irish records which had fallen into my hands, and inquiring for a teacher capable of instructing me in the Irish language, a Mr. Donovan, dreamy, harmless, and learned, was recommended to me for the purpose.

I found that he had been educated as a Sizar in Trinity College, Dublin. He now supported himself by teaching, and the special direction of my studies, I suppose, flattered his national partialities, for he unbosomed himself of much of his long-reserved thoughts, and recollections about his country and his early days. It was he who told me this story, and I mean to repeat it, as nearly as I can, in his own words.

I have myself seen the old farmhouse, with its orchard of huge mossgrown apple trees. I have looked round on the peculiar landscape; the roofless, ivied tower, that two hundred years before had afforded a refuge from raid and rapparee, and which still occupies its old place in the angle of the haggard; the bush-grown "liss," that scarcely a hundred and fifty steps away records the labours of a bygone race; the dark and towering outline of old Keeper in the background; and the lonely range of furze and heath-clad hills that form a nearer barrier, with many a line of grey rock and clump of dwarf oak or birch. The pervading sense of loneliness made it a scene not unsuited for a wild and unearthly story. And I could quite fancy how, seen in the grey of a wintry morning, shrouded far and wide in snow, or in the melancholy glory of an autumnal sunset, or in the chill splendour of a moonlight night, it might have helped to tone a dreamy mind like honest Dan Donovan's to superstition and a proneness to the illusions of fancy. It is certain, however, that I never anywhere met with a more simple-minded creature, or one on whose good faith I could more entirely rely.

When I was a boy, said he, living at home at Drumgunniol, I used to take my Goldsmith's *Roman History* in my hand and go down to my favourite seat, the flat stone, sheltered by a hawthorn tree beside the little lough, a large and deep pool, such as I have heard called a tarn in England. It lay in the gentle hollow of a field that is overhung toward the north by the old orchard, and being a deserted place was favourable to my studious quietude.

One day reading here, as usual, I wearied at last, and began to look about me, thinking of the heroic scenes I had just been reading of. I was as wide awake as I am at this moment, and I saw a woman appear at the corner of the orchard and walk down the slope. She wore a long, light grey dress, so long that it seemed to sweep the grass behind her, and so singular was her appearance in a part of the world where female attire is so inflexibly fixed by custom, that I could not take my eyes off her. Her course lay diagonally from corner to corner of the field, which was a large one, and she pursued it without swerving.

When she came near I could see that her feet were bare, and that she seemed to be looking steadfastly upon some remote object for guidance. Her route would have crossed me — had the tarn not interposed — about ten or twelve yards below the point at which I was sitting. But instead of arresting her course at the margin of the lough, as I had expected, she went on without seeming conscious of its existence, and I saw her, as plainly as I see you, sir, walk across the surface of the water, and pass, without seeming to see me, at about the distance I had calculated.

I was ready to faint from sheer terror. I was only thirteen years old then, and I remember every particular as if it had happened this hour.

The figure passed through the gap at the far corner of the field, and there I lost sight of it. I had hardly strength to walk home, and was so nervous, and ultimately so ill, that for three weeks I was confined to the house, and could not bear to be alone for a moment. I never entered that field again, such was the horror with which from that moment every object in it was clothed. Even at this distance of time I should not like to pass through it.

This apparition I connected with a mysterious event; and, also, with a singular liability, that has for nearly eight years distinguished, or rather afflicted, our family. It is no fancy. Everybody in that part of the country knows all about it. Everybody connected what I had seen with it.

I will tell it all to you as well as I can.

When I was about fourteen years old — that is about a year after the sight I had seen in the lough field — we were one night expecting my father home from the fair of Killaloe. My mother sat up to welcome him home, and I with her, for I liked nothing better than such a vigil. My brothers and sisters, and the farm servants, except the men who were driving home the cattle from the fair, were asleep in their beds. My mother and I were sitting in the chimney corner chatting together, and watching my father's supper, which was kept hot over the fire. We knew that he would return before the men who were driving home the cattle, for he was riding, and told us that he would only wait to see them fairly on the road, and then push homeward.

At length we heard his voice and the knocking of his loaded whip at the door, and my mother let him in. I don't think I ever saw my father drunk, which is more than most men of my age, from the same part of the country, could say of theirs. But he could drink his glass of whisky as well as another, and he usually came home from fair or market a little merry and mellow, and with a jolly flush in his cheeks.

Tonight he looked sunken, pale and sad. He entered with the saddle and bridle in his hand, and he dropped them against the wall, near the door, and put his arms round his wife's neck, and kissed her kindly.

"Welcome home, Meehal," said she, kissing him heartily.

"God bless you, mavourneen," he answered.

And hugging her again, he turned to me, who was plucking him by the hand, jealous of his notice. I was little, and light of my age, and he lifted me up in his arms, and kissed me, and my arms being about his neck, he said to my mother:

"Draw the bolt, acuishla."

She did so, and setting me down very dejectedly, he walked to the fire and sat down on a stool, and stretched his feet toward the glowing turf, leaning with his hands on his knees.

"Rouse up, Mick, darlin'," said my mother, who was growing anxious, "and tell me how did the cattle sell, and did everything go lucky at the fair, or is there anything wrong with the landlord, or what in the world is it that ails you, Mick, jewel?"

"Nothin', Molly. The cows sould well, thank God, and there's nothin' fell out between me an' the landlord, an' everything's the same way. There's no fault to find anywhere."

"Well, then, Mickey, since so it is, turn round to your hot supper, and ate it, and tell us is there anything new."

"I got my supper, Molly, on the way, and I can't ate a bit," he answered.

"Got your supper on the way, an' you knowin' 'twas waiting for you at home, an' your wife sittin' up an' all!" cried my mother, reproachfully.

"You're takin' a wrong meanin' out of what I say," said my father. "There's something happened that leaves me that I can't ate a mouthful, and I'll not be dark with you, Molly, for, maybe, it ain't very long I have to be here, an' I'll tell you what it was. It's what I've seen, the white cat."

"The Lord between us and harm!" exclaimed my mother, in a moment as pale and as chapfallen as my father; and then, trying to rally, with a laugh, she said: "Ha! 'tis only funnin' me you are. Sure a white rabbit was snared a Sunday last, in Grady's wood; an' Teigue seen a big white rat in the haggard yesterday."

"'Twas neither rat nor rabbit was in it. Don't ye think but I'd know a rat or a rabbit from a big white cat, with green eyes as big as halfpennies, and its back riz up like a bridge, trottin' on and across me, and ready, if I dar' stop, to rub its sides against my shins, and maybe to make a jump and seize my throat, if that it's a cat, at all, an' not something worse?"

As he ended his description in a low tone, looking straight at the fire, my father drew his big hand across his forehead once or twice, his face being damp and shining with the moisture of fear, and he sighed, or rather groaned, heavily.

My mother had relapsed into panic, and was praying again in her fear. I, too, was terribly frightened, and on the point of crying, for I knew all about the white cat.

Clapping my father on the shoulder, by way of encouragement, my mother leaned over him, kissing him, and at last began to cry. He was wringing her hands in his, and seemed in great trouble.

"There was nothin' came into the house with me?" he asked, in a very low tone, turning to me.

"There was nothin', father," I said, "but the saddle and bridle that was in your hand."

"Nothin' white kem in at the doore wid me," he repeated.

"Nothin' at all," I answered.

"So best," said my father, and making the sign of the cross, he began mumbling to himself, and I knew he was saying his prayers.

Waiting for a while, to give him time for this exercise, my mother asked him where he first saw it.

"When I was riding up the bohieren," — the Irish term meaning a little road, such as leads up to a farmhouse — "I bethought myself that the men was on the road with the cattle, and no one to look to the horse barrin' myself, so I thought I might as well leave him in the crooked field below, an' I tuck him there, he bein' cool, and not a hair turned, for I rode him aisy all the way. It was when I turned, after lettin' him go — the saddle and bridle bein' in my hand — that I saw it, pushin' out o' the long grass at the side o' the path, an' it walked across it, in front of me, an' then back again, before me, the same way, an' sometimes at one side, an' then at the other, lookin' at me wid them shinin' eyes; and I consayted I heard it growlin' as it kep' beside me — as close as ever you see — till I kem up to the doore, here, an' knocked an' called, as ye heerd me."

Now, what was it, in so simple an incident, that agitated my father, my mother, myself, and finally, every member of this rustic household, with a terrible foreboding? It was this that we, one and all, believed that my father had received, in thus encountering the white cat, a warning of his approaching death.

The omen had never failed hitherto. It did not fail now. In a week after my father took the fever that was going, and before a month he was dead.

My honest friend, Dan Donovan, paused here; I could perceive that he was praying, for his lips were busy, and I concluded that it was for the repose of that departed soul.

In a little while he resumed.

It is eighty years now since that omen first attached to my family. Eighty years? Ay, is it. Ninety is nearer the mark. And I have spoken to many old people, in those earlier times, who had a distinct recollection of everything connected with it.

It happened in this way.

My granduncle, Connor Donovan, had the old farm of Drumgunniol in his day. He was richer than ever my father was, or my father's father either, for he took a short lease of Balraghan, and made money of it. But money won't soften a hard heart, and I'm afraid my granduncle was a cruel man — a profligate man he was, surely, and that is mostly a cruel man at heart. He drank his share, too, and cursed and swore, when he was vexed, more than was good for his soul, I'm afraid.

At that time there was a beautiful girl of the Colemans, up in the mountains, not far from Capper Cullen. I'm told that there are no Colemans there now at all, and that family has passed away. The famine years made great changes.

Ellen Coleman was her name. The Colemans were not rich. But, being such a beauty, she might have made a good match. Worse than she did for herself, poor thing, she could not.

Con Donovan — my granduncle, God forgive him! — sometimes in his rambles saw her at fairs or patterns, and he fell in love with her, as who might not?

He used her ill. He promised her marriage, and persuaded her to come away with him; and, after all, he broke his word. It was just the old story. He tired of her, and he wanted to push himself in the world; and he married a girl of the Collopys, that had a great fortune — twenty-four cows, seventy sheep, and a hundred and twenty goats.

He married this Mary Collopy, and grew richer than before; and Ellen Coleman died broken-hearted. But that did not trouble the strong farmer much.

He would have liked to have children, but he had none, and this was the only cross he had to bear, for everything else went much as he wished.

One night he was returning from the fair of Nenagh. A shallow stream at that time crossed the road — they have thrown a bridge over it, I am told, some time since — and its channel was often dry in summer weather. When it was so, as it passes close by the old farmhouse of Drumgunniol, without a great deal of winding, it makes a sort of road, which people then used as a short cut to reach the house by. Into this dry channel, as there was plenty of light from the moon, my granduncle turned his horse, and when he had reached the two ash-trees at the meeting of the farm he turned his horse short into the river-field, intending to ride through the gap at the other end, under the oak-tree, and so he would have been within a few hundred yards of his door.

As he approached the “gap” he saw, or thought he saw, with a slow motion, gliding along the ground toward the same point, and now and then with a soft bound, a white object, which he described as being no bigger than his hat, but what it was he could not see, as it moved along the hedge and disappeared at the point to which he was himself tending.

When he reached the gap the horse stopped short. He urged and coaxed it in vain. He got down to lead it through, but it recoiled, snorted, and fell into a wild trembling fit. He mounted it again. But its terror continued, and it obstinately resisted his caresses and his whip. It was bright moonlight, and my granduncle was chafed by the horse’s resistance, and, seeing nothing to account for it, and being so near home, what little patience he possessed forsook him, and, plying his whip and spur in earnest, he broke into oaths and curses.

All on a sudden the horse sprang through, and Con Donovan, as he passed under the broad branch of the oak, saw clearly a woman standing on the bank beside him, her arm extended, with the hand of which, as he flew by, she struck him a blow upon the shoulders. It threw him forward upon the neck of the horse, which, in wild terror, reached the door at a gallop, and stood there quivering and steaming all over.

Less alive than dead, my granduncle got in. He told his story, at least, so much as he chose. His wife did not quite know what to think. But that something very bad had happened she could not doubt. He was very faint and ill, and begged that the priest should be sent for forthwith. When they were getting him to his bed they saw distinctly the marks of five fingerpoints on the flesh of his shoulder, where the spectral blow had fallen. These singular marks — which they said resembled in tint the hue of a body struck by lightning — remained imprinted on his flesh, and were buried with him.

When he had recovered sufficiently to talk with the people about him — speaking, like a man at his last hour, from a burdened heart, and troubled conscience — he repeated his story, but said he did not see, or, at all events, know, the face of the figure that stood in the gap. No one believed him. He told more about it to the priest than to others. He certainly had a secret to tell. He might as well have divulged it frankly, for the neighbours all knew well enough that it was the face of dead Ellen Coleman that he had seen.

From that moment my granduncle never raised his head. He was a scared, silent, broken-spirited man. It was early summer then, and at the fall of the leaf in the same year he died.

Of course there was a wake, such as becomed a strong farmer so rich as he. For some reason the arrangements of this ceremonial were a little different from the usual routine.

The usual practice is to place the body in the great room, or kitchen, as it is called, of the house. In this particular case there was, as I told you, for some reason, an unusual arrangement. The body was placed in a small room that opened upon the greater one. The door of this, during the wake, stood open. There were candles about the bed, and pipes and tobacco on the table, and stools for such guests as chose to enter, the door standing open for their reception.

The body, having been laid out, was left alone, in this smaller room, during the preparations for the wake. After nightfall one of the women, approaching the bed to get a chair which she had left near it, rushed from the room with a scream, and, having recovered her speech at the further end of the “kitchen,” and surrounded by a gaping audience, she said, at last:

“May I never sin, if his face bain’t riz up again the back o’ the bed, and he starin’ down to the doore, wid eyes as big as pewter plates, that id be shinin’ in the moon!”

“Arra, woman! Is it cracked you are?” said one of the farm boys as they are termed, being men of any age you please.

“Agh, Molly, don’t be talkin’, woman! ’Tis what ye consayted it, goin’ into the dark room, out o’ the light. Why didn’t ye take a candle in your fingers, ye aumadhaun?” said one of her female companions.

“Candle, or no candle; I seen it,” insisted Molly. “An’ what’s more, I could a’most tak’ my oath I seen his arum, too, stretchin’ out o’ the bed along the flure, three times as long as it should be, to take hould o’ me be the fut.”

“Nansinse, ye fool, what id he want o’ yer fut?” exclaimed one scornfully.

“Gi’ me the candle, some o’ yez — in the name o’ God,” said old Sal Doolan, that was straight and lean, and a woman that could pray like a priest almost.

“Give her a candle,” agreed all.

But whatever they might say, there wasn’t one among them that did not look pale and stern enough as they followed Mrs. Doolan, who was praying as fast as her lips could patter, and leading the van with a tallow candle, held like a taper, in her fingers.

The door was half open, as the panic-stricken girl had left it; and holding the candle on high the better to examine the room, she made a step or so into it.

If my granduncle’s hand had been stretched along the floor, in the unnatural way described, he had drawn it back again under the sheet that covered him. And tall Mrs. Doolan was in no danger of tripping over his arm as she entered. But she had not gone

more than a step or two with her candle aloft, when, with a drowning face, she suddenly stopped short, staring at the bed which was now fully in view.

"Lord, bless us, Mrs. Doolan, ma'am, come back," said the woman next her, who had fast hold of her dress, or her 'coat,' as they call it, and drawing her backwards with a frightened pluck, while a general recoil among her followers betokened the alarm which her hesitation had inspired.

"Whisht, will yez?" said the leader, peremptorily, "I can't hear my own ears wid the noise ye're makin', an' which iv yez let the cat in here, an' whose cat is it?" she asked, peering suspiciously at a white cat that was sitting on the breast of the corpse.

"Put it away, will yez?" she resumed, with horror at the profanation. "Many a corpse as I sthretched and crossed in the bed, the likes o' that I never seen yet. The man o' the house, wid a brute baste like that mounted on him, like a phooka, Lord forgi' me for namin' the like in this room. Dhrove it away, some o' yez! out o' that, this minute, I tell ye."

Each repeated the order, but no one seemed inclined to execute it. They were crossing themselves, and whispering their conjectures and misgivings as to the nature of the beast, which was no cat of that house, nor one that they had ever seen before. On a sudden, the white cat placed itself on the pillow over the head of the body, and having from that place glared for a time at them over the features of the corpse, it crept softly along the body towards them, growling low and fiercely as it drew near.

Out of the room they bounced, in dreadful confusion, shutting the door fast after them, and not for a good while did the hardest venture to peep in again.

The white cat was sitting in its old place, on the dead man's breast, but this time it crept quietly down the side of the bed, and disappeared under it, the sheet which was spread like a coverlet, and hung down nearly to the floor, concealing it from view.

Praying, crossing themselves, and not forgetting a sprinkling of holy water, they peeped, and finally searched, poking spades, "wattles," pitchforks and such implements under the bed. But the cat was not to be found, and they concluded that it had made its escape among their feet as they stood near the threshold. So they secured the door carefully, with hasp and padlock. But when the door was opened next morning they found the white cat sitting, as if it had never been disturbed, upon the breast of the dead man.

Again occurred very nearly the same scene with a like result, only that some said they saw the cat afterwards lurking under a big box in a corner of the outer-room, where my granduncle kept his leases and papers, and his prayer-book and beads.

Mrs. Doolan heard it growling at her heels wherever she went; and although she could not see it, she could hear it spring on the back of her chair when she sat down, and growl in her ear, so that she would bounce up with a scream and a prayer, fancying that it was on the point of taking her by the throat.

And the priest's boy, looking round the corner, under the branches of the old orchard, saw a white cat sitting under the little window of the room where my granduncle was laid out and looking up at the four small panes of glass as a cat will watch a bird.

The end of it was that the cat was found on the corpse again, when the room was visited, and do what they might, whenever the body was left alone, the cat was found again in the same ill-omened contiguity with the dead man. And this continued, to the scandal and fear of the neighbourhood, until the door was opened finally for the wake.

My granduncle being dead, and, with all due solemnities, buried, I have done with him. But not quite yet with the white cat. No banshee ever yet was more inalienably attached to a family than this ominous apparition is to mine. But there is this difference. The banshee seems to be animated with an affectionate sympathy with the bereaved family to whom it is hereditarily attached, whereas this thing has about it a suspicion of malice. It is the messenger simply of death. And its taking the shape of a cat — the coldest, and they say, the most vindictive of brutes — is indicative of the spirit of its visit.

When my grandfather's death was near, although he seemed quite well at the time, it appeared not exactly, but very nearly in the same way in which I told you it showed itself to my father.

The day before my Uncle Teigue was killed by the bursting of his gun, it appeared to him in the evening, at twilight, by the lough, in the field where I saw the woman who walked across the water, as I told you. My uncle was washing the barrel of his gun in the lough. The grass is short there, and there is no cover near it. He did not know how it approached; but the first he saw of it, the white cat was walking close round his feet, in the twilight, with an angry twist of its tail, and a green glare in its eyes, and do what he would, it continued walking round and round him, in larger or smaller circles, till he reached the orchard, and there he lost it.

My poor Aunt Peg — she married one of the O'Brians, near Oolah — came to Drumgunniol to go to the funeral of a cousin who died about a mile away. She died herself, poor woman, only a month after.

Coming from the wake, at two or three o'clock in the morning, as she got over the style into the farm of Drumgunniol, she saw the white cat at her side, and it kept close beside her, she ready to faint all the time, till she reached the door of the house, where it made a spring up into the whitethorn tree that grows close by, and so it parted from her. And my little brother Jim saw it also, just three weeks before he died. Every member of our family who dies, or takes his death-sickness, at Drumgunniol, is sure to see the white cat, and no one of us who sees it need hope for long life after.

SIR DOMINICK'S BARGAIN: A LEGEND OF DUNORAN

Anonymous in *All the Year Round* (1872)

In the early autumn of the year 1838, business called me to the south of Ireland. The weather was delightful, the scenery and people were new to me, and sending my luggage on by the mail-coach route in charge of a servant, I hired a serviceable nag at a posting-house, and, full of the curiosity of an explorer, I commenced a leisurely journey of five-and-twenty miles on horseback, by sequestered cross-roads, to my place of destination. By bog and hill, by plain and ruined castle, and many a winding stream, my picturesque road led me.

I had started late, and having made little more than half my journey, I was thinking of making a short halt at the next convenient place, and letting my horse have a rest and a feed, and making some provision also for the comforts of his rider.

It was about four o'clock when the road, ascending a gradual steep, found a passage through a rocky gorge between the abrupt termination of a range of mountain to my left and a rocky hill, that rose dark and sudden at my right. Below me lay a little thatched village, under a long line of gigantic beech-trees, through the boughs of which the lowly chimneys sent up their thin turf-smoke. To my left, stretched away for miles, ascending the mountain range I have mentioned, a wild park, through whose sward and ferns the rock broke, timeworn and lichen-stained. This park was studded with straggling wood, which thickened to something like a forest, behind and beyond the little village I was approaching, clothing the irregular ascent of the hillsides with beautiful, and in some places discoloured foliage.

As you descend, the road winds slightly, with the grey park-wall, built of loose stone, and mantled here and there with ivy, at its left, and crosses a shallow ford; and as I approached the village, through breaks in the woodlands, I caught glimpses of the long front of an old ruined house, placed among the trees, about halfway up the picturesque mountain-side.

The solitude and melancholy of this ruin piqued my curiosity, and when I had reached the rude thatched public-house, with the sign of St. Columbkil, with robes, mitre, and crozier displayed over its lintel, having seen to my horse and made a good meal myself on a rasher and eggs, I began to think again of the wooded park and the ruinous house, and resolved on a ramble of half an hour among its sylvan solitudes.

The name of the place, I found, was Dunoran; and beside the gate a stile admitted to the grounds, through which, with a pensive enjoyment, I began to saunter towards the dilapidated mansion.

A long grass-grown road, with many turns and windings, led up to the old house, under the shadow of the wood.

The road, as it approached the house skirted the edge of a precipitous glen, clothed with hazel, dwarf-oak, and thorn, and the silent house stood with its wide-open hall-door facing this dark ravine, the further edge of which was crowned with towering forest; and great trees stood about the house and its deserted courtyard and stables.

I walked in and looked about me, through passages overgrown with nettles and weeds; from room to room with ceilings rotted, and here and there a great beam dark and worn, with tendrils of ivy trailing over it. The tall walls with rotten plaster were stained and mouldy, and in some rooms the remains of decayed wainscoting crazily swung to and fro. The almost sashless windows were darkened also with ivy, and about the tall chimneys the jackdaws were wheeling, while from the huge trees that overhung the glen in sombre masses at the other side, the rooks kept up a ceaseless cawing.

As I walked through these melancholy passages — peeping only into some of the rooms, for the flooring was quite gone in the middle, and bowed down toward the centre, and the house was very nearly un-roofed, a state of things which made the exploration a little critical — I began to wonder why so grand a house, in the midst of scenery so picturesque, had been permitted to go to decay; I dreamed of the hospitalities of which it had long ago been the rallying place, and I thought what a scene of Redgauntlet revelries it might disclose at midnight.

The great staircase was of oak, which had stood the weather wonderfully, and I sat down upon its steps, musing vaguely on the transitoriness of all things under the sun.

Except for the hoarse and distant clamour of the rooks, hardly audible where I sat, no sound broke the profound stillness of the spot. Such a sense of solitude I have seldom experienced before. The air was stirless, there was not even the rustle of a withered leaf along the passage. It was oppressive. The tall trees that stood close about the building darkened it, and added something of awe to the melancholy of the scene.

In this mood I heard, with an unpleasant surprise, close to me, a voice that was drawling, and, I fancied, sneering, repeat the words: "Food for worms, dead and rotten; God over all."

There was a small window in the wall, here very thick, which had been built up, and in the dark recess of this, deep in the shadow, I now saw a sharp-featured man, sitting with his feet dangling. His keen eyes were fixed on me, and he was smiling cynically, and before I had well recovered my surprise, he repeated the distich:

/P "If death was a thing that money could buy, The rich they would live, and the poor they would die. P/

"It was a grand house in its day, sir," he continued, "Dunoran House, and the Sarsfields. Sir Dominick Sarsfield was the last of the old stock. He lost his life not six foot away from where you are sitting."

As he thus spoke he let himself down, with a little jump, on to the ground.

He was a dark-faced, sharp-featured, little hunchback, and had a walking-stick in his hand, with the end of which he pointed to a rusty stain in the plaster of the wall.

"Do you mind that mark, sir?" he asked.

"Yes," I said, standing up, and looking at it, with a curious anticipation of something worth hearing.

"That's about seven or eight feet from the ground, sir, and you'll not guess what it is."

"I dare say not," said I, "unless it is a stain from the weather."

"'Tis nothing so lucky, sir," he answered, with the same cynical smile and a wag of his head, still pointing at the mark with his stick. "That's a splash of brains and blood. It's there this hundred years; and it will never leave it while the wall stands."

"He was murdered, then?"

"Worse than that, sir," he answered.

"He killed himself, perhaps?"

"Worse than that, itself, this cross between us and harm! I'm oulder than I look, sir; you wouldn't guess my years."

He became silent, and looked at me, evidently inviting a guess.

"Well, I should guess you to be about five-and-fifty."

He laughed, and took a pinch of snuff, and said:

"I'm that, your honour, and something to the back of it. I was seventy last Candlemas. You would not a' thought that, to look at me."

"Upon my word I should not; I can hardly believe it even now. Still, you don't remember Sir Dominick Sarsfield's death?" I said, glancing up at the ominous stain on the wall.

"No, sir, that was a long while before I was born. But my grandfather was butler here long ago, and many a time I heard tell how Sir Dominick came by his death. There was no mather in the great house ever sinst that happened. But there was two sarvants in care of it, and my aunt was one o' them; and she kep' me here wid her till I was nine year old, and she was lavin' the place to go to Dublin; and from that time it was let to go down. The wind sthript the roof, and the rain rotted the timber, and little by little, in sixty years' time, it kem to what you see. But I have a likin' for it still, for the sake of ould times; and I never come this way but I take a look in. I don't think it's many more times I'll be turnin' to see the ould place, for I'll be undher the sod myself before long."

"You'll outlive younger people," I said.

And, quitting that trite subject, I ran on:

"I don't wonder that you like this old place; it is a beautiful spot, such noble trees."

"I wish ye seen the glin when the nuts is ripe; they're the sweetest nuts in all Ireland, I think," he rejoined, with a practical sense of the picturesque. "You'd fill your pockets while you'd be lookin' about you."

"These are very fine old woods," I remarked. "I have not seen any in Ireland I thought so beautiful."

"Eiah! your honour, the woods about here is nothing to what they wor. Al the mountains along here was wood when my father was a gossoon, and Murroa Wood was the grandest of them all. All oak mostly, and all cut down as bare as the road. Not one left here that's fit to compare with them. Which way did your honour come hither — from Limerick?"

"No. Killaloe."

"Well, then, you passed the ground where Murroa Wood was in former times. You kem undher Lisnavourra, the steep knob of a hill about a mile above the village here. 'Twas near that Murroa Wood was, and 'twas there Sir Dominick Sarsfield first met the devil, the Lord between us and harm, and a bad meeting it was for him and his."

I had become interested in the adventure which had occurred in the very scenery which had so greatly attracted me, and my new acquaintance, the little hunchback, was easily entreated to tell me the story, and spoke thus, so soon as we had each resumed his seat:

"It was a fine estate when Sir Dominick came into it; and grand doings there was entirely, feasting and fiddling, free quarters for all the pipers in the counthry round, and a welcome for every one that liked to come. There was wine, by the hogshead, for the quality; and potteen enough to set a town a-fire, and beer and cidher enough to float a navy, for the boys and girls, and the likes o' me. It was kep' up the best part of a month, till the weather broke, and the rain spoilt the sod for the moneen jigs, and the fair of Allybally Killudeen comin' on they wor obliged to give over their divarsion, and attind to the pigs."

But Sir Dominick was only beginnin' when they wor lavin' off. There was no way of gettin' rid of his money and estates he did not try — what with drinkin', dicin', racin', cards, and all soarts, it was not many years before the estates wor in debt, and Sir Dominick a distressed man. He showed a bold front to the world as long as he could; and then he sould off his dogs, and most of his horses, and gev out he was going to thraavel in France, and the like; and so off with him for awhile; and no one in these parts heard tale or tidings of him for two or three years. Till at last quite unexpected, one night there comes a rapping at the big kitchen window. It was past ten o'clock, and old Connor Hanlon, the butler, my grandfather, was sittin' by the fire alone, warming his shins over it. There was keen east wind blowing along the mountains that night, and whistling cowl'd enough, through the tops of the trees, and soundin' lonesome through the long chimneys.

(And the story-teller glanced up at the nearest stack visible from his seat.)

So he wasn't quite sure of the knockin' at the window, and up he gets, and sees his master's face.

My grandfather was glad to see him safe, for it was a long time since there was any news of him; but he was sorry, too, for it was a changed place and only himself and old Juggy Broadrick in charge of the house, and a man in the stables, and it was a poor thing to see him comin' back to his own like that.

He shook Con by the hand, and says he:

"I came here to say a word to you. I left my horse with Dick in the stable; I may want him again before morning, or I may never want him."

And with that he turns into the big kitchen, and draws a stool, and sits down to take an air of the fire.

"Sit down, Connor, opposite me, and listen to what I tell you, and don't be afeard to say what you think."

He spoke all the time lookin' into the fire, with his hands stretched over it, and a tired man he looked.

"An' why should I be afeard, Mather Dominick?" says my grandfather. "Yourself was a good mather to me, and so was your father, rest his sould, before you, and I'll say the truth, and dar' the devil, and more than that, for any Sarsfield of Dunoran, much less yourself, and a good right I'd have."

"It's all over with me, Con," says Sir Dominick.

"Heaven forbid!" says my grandfather.

"'Tis past praying for," says Sir Dominick. "The last guinea's gone; the ould place will follow it. It must be sold, and I'm come here, I don't know why, like a ghost to have a last look round me, and go off in the dark again."

And with that he tould him to be sure, in case he should hear of his death, to give the oak box, in the closet off his room, to his cousin, Pat Sarsfield, in Dublin, and the sword and pistols his grandfather carried in Aughrim, and two or three thrifling

things of the kind.

And says he, "Con, they say if the devil gives you money overnight, you'll find nothing but a bagful of pebbles, and chips, and nutshells, in the morning. If I thought he played fair, I'm in the humour to make a bargain with him tonight."

"Lord forbid!" says my grandfather, standing up, with a start and crossing himself.

"They say the country's full of men, listin' sogers for the King o' France. If I light on one o' them, I'll not refuse his offer. How contrary things goes! How long is it since me an Captain Waller fought the jewel at New Castle?"

"Six years, Masther Dominick, and ye broke his thigh with the bullet the first shot."

"I did, Con," says he, "and I wish, instead, he had shot me through the heart. Have you any whisky?"

My grandfather took it out of the buffet, and the masther pours out some into a bowl, and drank it off.

"I'll go out and have a look at my horse," says he, standing up. There was sort of a stare in his eyes, as he pulled his riding-cloak about him, as if there was something bad in his thoughts.

"Sure, I won't be a minute running out myself to the stable, and looking after the horse for you myself," says my grandfather.

"I'm not goin' to the stable," says Sir Dominick; "I may as well tell you, for I see you found it out already — I'm goin' across the deer-park; if I come back you'll see me in an hour's time. But, anyhow, you'd better not follow me, for if you do I'll shoot you, and that 'id be a bad ending to our friendship."

And with that he walks down this passage here, and turns the key in the side door at that end of it, and out wid him on the sod into the moonlight and the cowl'd wind; and my grandfather seen him walkin' hard towards the park-wall, and then he comes in and closes the door with a heavy heart.

Sir Dominick stopped to think when he got to the middle of the deer-park, for he had not made up his mind, when he left the house, and the whisky did not clear his head, only it gev him courage.

He did not feel the cowl'd wind now, nor fear death, nor think much of anything but the shame and fall of the old family.

And he made up his mind, if no better thought came to him between that and there, so soon as he came to Murroa Wood, he'd hang himself from one of the oak branches with his cravat.

It was a bright moonlight night, there was just a bit of a cloud driving across the moon now and then, but, only for that, as light a'most as day.

Down he goes, right for the wood of Murroa. It seemed to him every step he took was as long as three, and it was no time till he was among the big oak-trees with their roots spreading from one to another, and their branches stretching overhead like the timbers of a naked roof, and the moon shining down through them, and casting their shadows thick and twist abroad on the ground as black as my shoe.

He was sobering a bit by this time, and he slacked his pace, and he thought 'twould be better to list in the French king's army, and thry what that might do for him, for he knew a man might take his own life any time, but it would puzzle him to take it back again when he liked.

Just as he made up his mind not to make away with himself, what should he hear but a step clinkin' along the dry ground under the trees, and soon he sees a grand gentleman right before him comin' up to meet him.

He was a handsome young man like himself, and he wore a cocked-hat with gold-lace round it, such as officers wears on their coats, and he had on a dress the same as French officers wore in them times.

He stopped opposite Sir Dominick, and he cum to a standstill also.

The two gentlemen took off their hats to one another, and says the stranger:

"I am recruiting, sir," says he, "for my sovereign, and you'll find my money won't turn into pebbles, chips, and nutshells, by tomorrow."

At the same time he pulls out a big purse full of gold.

The minute he set eyes on that gentleman, Sir Dominick had his own opinion of him; and at those words he felt the very hair standing up on his head.

"Don't be afraid," says he, "the money won't burn you. If it proves honest gold, and if it prospers with you, I'm willing to make a bargain. This is the last day of February," says he; "I'll serve you seven years, and at the end of that time you shall serve me, and I'll come for you when the seven years is over, when the clock turns the minute between February and March; and the first of March ye'll come away with me, or never. You'll not find me a bad master, any more than a bad servant. I love my own; and I command all the pleasures and the glory of the world. The bargain dates from this day, and the lease is out at midnight on the last day I told you; and in the year" — he told him the year, it was easy reckoned, but I forget it — "and if you'd rather wait," he says, "for eight months and twenty eight days, before you sign the writin', you may, if you meet me here. But I can't do a great deal for you in the mean time; and if you don't sign then, all you get from me, up to that time, will vanish away, and you'll be just as you are tonight, and ready to hang yourself on the first tree you meet."

Well, the end of it was, Sir Dominick chose to wait, and he came back to the house with a big bag full of money, as round as your hat a'most.

My grandfather was glad enough, you may be sure, to see the master safe and sound again so soon. Into the kitchen he bangs again, and swings the bag o' money on the table; and he stands up straight, and heaves up his shoulders like a man that has just got shut of a load; and he looks at the bag, and my grandfather looks at him, and from him to it, and back again. Sir Dominick looked as white as a sheet, and says he:

"I don't know, Con, what's in it; it's the heaviest load I ever carried."

He seemed shy of openin' the bag; and he made my grandfather heap up a roaring fire of turf and wood, and then, at last, he opens it, and, sure enough, 'twas stuffed full o' golden guineas, bright and new, as if they were only that minute out o' the Mint.

Sir Dominick made my grandfather sit at his elbow while he counted every guinea in the bag.

When he was done countin', and it wasn't far from daylight when that time came, Sir Dominick made my grandfather swear not to tell a word about it. And a close secret it was for many a day after.

When the eight months and twenty-eight days were pretty near spent and ended, Sir Dominick returned to the house here with a troubled mind, in doubt what was best to be done, and no one alive but my grandfather knew anything about the matter, and he not half what had happened.

As the day drew near, towards the end of October, Sir Dominick grew only more and more troubled in mind.

One time he made up his mind to have no more to say to such things, nor to speak again with the like of them he met with in the wood of Murroa. Then, again, his heart failed him when he thought of his debts, and he not knowing where to turn. Then, only a week before the day, everything began to go wrong with him. One man wrote from London to say that Sir Dominick paid three thousand pounds to the wrong man, and must pay it over again; another demanded a debt he never heard of before; and another, in Dublin, denied the payment of a thundherin' big bill, and Sir Dominick could nowhere find the receipt, and so on, wid fifty other things as bad.

Well, by the time the night of the 28th of October came round, he was a'most ready to lose his senses with all the demands that was risin' up again him on all sides, and nothing to meet them but the help of the one dhreadful friend he had to depind on at night in the oak-wood down there below.

So there was nothing for it but to go through with the business that was begun already, and about the same hour as he went last, he takes off the little crucifix he wore round his neck, for he was a Catholic, and his gospel, and his bit o' the thrue cross that he had in a locket, for since he took the money from the Evil One he was growin' frightful in himself, and got all he could to guard him from the power of the devil. But tonight, for his life, he daren't take them with him. So he gives them into my grandfather's hands without a word, only he looked as white as a sheet o' paper; and he takes his hat and sword, and telling my grandfather to watch for him, away he goes, to try what would come of it.

It was a fine still night, and the moon — not so bright, though, now as the first time — was shinin' over heath and rock, and down on the lonesome oak-wood below him.

His heart beat thick as he drew near it. There was not a sound, not even the distant bark of a dog from the village behind him. There was not a lonesomer spot in the country round, and if it wasn't for his debts and losses that was drivin' him on half mad, in spite of his fears for his soul and his hopes of paradise, and all his good angel was whisperin' in his ear, he would a' turned back, and sent for his clargy, and made his confession and his penance, and changed his ways, and led a good life, for he was frightened enough to have done a great dale.

Softer and slower he stept as he got, once more, in undher the big branches of the oak-threes; and when he got in a bit, near where he met with the bad spirit before, he stopped and looked round him, and felt himself, every bit, turning as cowl'd as a dead man, and you may be sure he did not feel much better when he seen the same man steppin' from behind the big tree that was touchin' his elbow a'most.

"You found the money good," says he, "but it was not enough. No matter, you shall have enough and to spare. I'll see after your luck, and I'll give you a hint whenever it can serve you; and any time you want to see me you have only to come down here, and call my face to mind, and wish me present. You shan't owe a shilling by the end of the year, and you shall never miss the right card, the best throw, and the winning horse. Are you willing?"

The young gentleman's voice almost stuck in his throat, and his hair was rising on his head, but he did get out a word or two to signify that he consented; and with that the Evil One handed him a needle, and bid him give him three drops of blood from his arm; and he took them in the cup of an acorn, and gave him a pen, and bid him write some words that he repeated, and that Sir Dominick did not understand, on two thin slips of parchment. He took one himself and the other he sunk in Sir Dominick's arm at the place where he drew the blood, and he closed the flesh over it. And that's as true as you're sittin' there!

Well, Sir Dominick went home. He was a frightened man, and well he might be. But in a little time he began to grow aisier in his mind. Anyhow, he got out of debt very quick, and money came tumbling in to make him richer, and everything he took in hand prospered, and he never made a wager, or played a game, but he won; and for all that, there was not a poor man on the estate that was not happier than Sir Dominick.

So he took again to his old ways; for, when the money came back, all came back, and there were hounds and horses, and wine galore, and no end of company, and grand doin's, and divarson, up here at the great house. And some said Sir Dominick was thinkin' of gettin' married; and more said he wasn't. But, anyhow, there was somethin' troublin' him more than common, and so one night, unknownst to all, away he goes to the lonesome oak-wood. It was something, maybe, my grandfather thought was troublin' him about a beautiful young lady he was jealous of, and mad in love with her. But that was only guess.

Well, when Sir Dominick got into the wood this time, he grew more in dread than ever; and he was on the point of turnin' and lavin' the place, when who should he see, close beside him, but my gentleman, seated on a big stone undher one of the trees. In place of looking the fine young gentleman in goold lace and grand clothes he appeared before, he was now in rags, he looked twice the size he had been, and his face smutted with soot, and he had a murtherin' big steel hammer, as heavy as a halfhundred, with a handle a yard long, across his knees. It was so dark under the tree, he did not see him quite clear for some time.

He stood up, and he looked awful tall entirely. And what passed between them in that discourse my grandfather never heered. But Sir Dominick was as black as night afterwards, and hadn't a laugh for anything nor a word a'most for any one, and he only grew worse and worse, and darker and darker. And now this thing, whatever it was, used to come to him of its own accord, whether he wanted it or no; sometimes in one shape, and sometimes in another, in lonesome places, and sometimes at his side by night when he'd be ridin' home alone, until at last he lost heart altogether and sent for the priest.

The priest was with him a long time, and when he heered the whole story, he rode off all the way for the bishop, and the bishop came here to the great house next day, and he gev Sir Dominick a good advice. He toul't him he must give over dicin', and swearin', and drinkin', and all bad company, and live a vartuous steady life until the seven years bargain was out, and if the divil didn't come for him the minute after the stroke of twelve the first morning of the month of March, he was safe out of the bargain. There was not more than eight or ten months to run now before the seven years wor out, and he lived all the time according to the bishop's advice, as strict as if he was "in retreat."

Well, you may guess he felt quare enough when the mornin' of the 28th of February came.

The priest came up by appointment, and Sir Dominick and his raverence wor together in the room you see there, and kep' up their prayers together till the clock struck twelve, and a good hour after, and not a sign of a disturbance, nor nothing came near them, and the priest slep' that night in the house in the room next Sir Dominick's, and all went over as comfortable as could be, and they shook hands and kissed like two comrades after winning a battle.

So, now, Sir Dominick thought he might as well have a pleasant evening, after all his fastin' and praying; and he sent round to half a dozen of the neighbouring gentlemen to come and dine with him, and his raverence stayed and dined also, and a roarin' bowl o' punch they had, and no end o' wine, and the swearin' and dice, and cards and guineas changing hands, and songs and stories, that wouldn't do any one good to hear, and the priest slipped away, when he seen the turn things was takin', and it was not far from the stroke of twelve when Sir Dominick, sitting at the head of his table, swears, "this is the best first of March I ever sat down with my friends."

"It ain't the first o' March," says Mr. Hiffernan of Ballyvoreen. He was a scholar, and always kep' an almanack.

"What is it, then?" says Sir Dominick, startin' up, and dhroppin' the ladle into the bowl, and starin' at him as if he had two heads.

"'Tis the twenty-ninth of February, leap year," says he. And just as they were talkin', the clock strikes twelve; and my grandfather, who was half asleep in a chair by the fire in the hall, openin' his eyes, sees a short square fellow with a cloak on, and long black hair bushin' out from under his hat, standin' just there where you see the bit o' light shinin' again' the wall.

(My hunchbacked friend pointed with his stick to a little patch of red sunset light that relieved the deepening shadow of the passage.)

"Tell your master," says he, in an awful voice, like the growl of a baist, "that I'm here by appointment, and expect him downstairs this minute."

Up goes my grandfather, by these very steps you are sittin' on.

"Tell him I can't come down yet," says Sir Dominick, and he turns to the company in the room, and says he with a cold sweat shinin' on his face, "for God's sake, gentlemen, will any of you jump from the window and bring the priest here?" One looked at another and no one knew what to make of it, and in the mean time, up comes my grandfather again, and says he, tremblin', "He says, sir, unless you go down to him, he'll come up to you."

"I don't understand this, gentlemen, I'll see what it means," says Sir Dominick, trying to put a face on it, and walkin' out o' the room like a man through the pressroom, with the hangman waitin' for him outside. Down the stairs he comes, and two or three of the gentlemen peeping over the banisters, to see. My grandfather was walking six or eight steps behind him, and he seen the stranger take a stride out to meet Sir Dominick, and catch him up in his arms, and whirl his head against the wall, and wi' that the hall-doore flies open, and out goes the candles, and the turf and wood-ashes flyin' with the wind out o' the hall-fire, ran in a drift o' sparks along the floore by his feet.

Down runs the gintlemen. Bang goes the hall-doore. Some comes runnin' up, and more runnin' down, with lights. It was all over with Sir Dominick. They lifted up the corpse, and put its shoulders again' the wall; but there was not a gasp left in him. He was cowl'd and stiffenin' already.

Pat Donovan was comin' up to the great house late that night and after he passed the little brook, that the carriage track up to the house crosses, and about fifty steps to this side of it, his dog, that was by his side, makes a sudden wheel, and springs over the wall, and sets up a yowlin' inside you'd hear a mile away; and that minute two men passed him by in silence, goin' down from the house, one of them short and square, and the other like Sir Dominick in shape, but there was little light under the trees where he was, and they looked only like shadows; and as they passed him by he could not hear the sound of their feet and he drew back to the wall frightened; and when he got up to the great house, he found all in confusion, and the master's body, with the head smashed to pieces, lying just on *that spot*.

The narrator stood up and indicated with the point of his stick the exact site of the body, and, as I looked, the shadow deepened, the red stain of sunlight vanished from the wall, and the sun had gone down behind the distant hill of New Castle, leaving the haunted scene in the deep grey of darkening twilight.

So I and the story-teller parted, not without good wishes on both sides, and a little "tip," which seemed not unwelcome, from me.

It was dusk and the moon up by the time I reached the village, remounted my nag, and looked my last on the scene of the terrible legend of Dunoran.

HYACINTH O'TOOLE

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IN the course of my life I have met with more accidents and assaults than twenty other men, and they never cost me any trouble to speak of — cats, prods, and gunshot, all came quite natural, and healed like enchantment. It was a murdering pity I was not a general. I could have stood any amount of hacking, and slashing, and riddling, and been never the worse man, nor a week on the sick-list. A shoemaker mistook me one day for a county Cork man that was paying attentions to his wife, and gave me a slice with his half-moon knife — bad luck to that ugly instrument — as I was walking down Petticoat Lane, no more thinking of his wife, I give you my solemn honour, than Saint Joseph of Arimathea was of Potiphar's. The next thing was, Baron Dromdouski — a Polish refugee of distinction, and a perfect gentleman, I will day, and played the guitar like an angel, though liable occasionally to be carried away by his feelings — stuck me with an oyster-knife, while we were differing on politics, in the "Good Samaritan" in Exchange Street. I could count up fifty such unlucky catastrophes; but I think the worst was, what happened to me as I was whistling in the hall of my lodgings, where I was waiting to take Miss Doolan out for a walk.

I must tell you there's nothing on earth I hate equal to a cat, and it is the only thing that walks on feet I was ever thoroughly affeared to look in the face. It's a dread that was born with me, and it will never leave me; and I'd run into Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace away from one, and I think I'd have jumped after Quintus Curtius into the bottomless abyss if there was a cat behind me.

Well the cause of this accident I'm going to mention, was our cook, poor thing, that was flighty and out of her mind for love of a private grenadier in the Buffs, and she drove a three-pronged iron toasting-fork, between the kitchen banisters, up to the hilt in the calf of my leg. I thought it was the cat that I saw there, looking like mischief, only a minute before, and I gave a screech and a jump, and I went flying into the hall with the toasting-fork stuck in my leg.

"La! Mr. Toole, what's that stuck in your leg?" cries Miss Doolan, who was that minute coming down the stairs.

"It's the cat," I roared, almost out of my senses, and away with me out of the hall-door, that chanced to be open, and down the street I pegged like a madman, knocking my hat off on an old gentleman's face, that was looking out of his study-window, and never waiting to pick it up. I thought the beast would never let go, and my hair was standing up on my head, and I wish you saw the capers I cut, trying to shake it off.

"For the Lord's sake," I implored, dancing mad in the middle of the street, "will some of you pull it off my leg? I'll give yon a shilling, whoever does."

"I'll take it off," says a goodnatured scavenger, that thought I was mad — and bedad I wasn't far from it — and he strove to catch hold of the handle of the fork; and I was so wild with fright I made a cut at the animal with my stick behind, and struck the scavenger right across the knuckles, and on I ran feeling the cat's teeth and claws, as I thought, fast in me still.

"Bad luck to you, ye Turk!" says the scavenger, shying a stone at me, as big as a lemon, and knocking a carman out of his dicky with it, pipe, whip, caubeen, and all.

"Look what's stuck in his leg, boys!" called out the blackguard little children, running after me. "See there, look, look, look what's stuck in his leg!"

"Will some of you hit it, lick it, wallop it? It's *mad*!" I holloaed. By this time I was running up Grafton Street, and every one looking after me, some wondering, some laughing, and some frightened.

"It's fastened in my leg!" I roared. "Will none of you pull it off?"

"I will," says one.

"Shoot it," says I.

"I will," says another.

"It's *mad*!" said I.

"Stop your capers, man, and I'll pull it out," says another.

"Give it a lick," said I, "break its back, stick a knife in it."

"Arra! Bother ye. How much ironmongery do you want?" says another. "Stop aisy, and I'll coax it out in a jiffy."

"Do," said I, "coax it; its name's Mufti."

"It was a little thief that snatched it out at last, as it trailed along the ground, and a devil of a hard pluck it took, and ran away with it and pawned it for a penny."

Well, I need go no further; I mentioned these, and might mention fifty other wounds, to show you that they were no trifles, and I can take my davy there was not one of the series that took a week to heal.

I'm happy to tell you that I was quite sufficiently well to avail myself of Mrs. Molloy's invitation to drink tea, go to the play, and return to supper with her agreeable party. I need not tell you that if I had had as many holes in my body as a colander, and was bleeding at every pore, I would have contrived, cost what it might, to drag myself to the side of the beautiful Theodora, although it was only to expire at her feet.

The hour named for assembling at the hospitable lodgings of the Molloy's was halfpast five. I dressed myself with uncommon care. We sported wonderful high and voluminous white cravats in those days, which had a good deal the effect of modem poultices. We wore besides under-waistcoats of coloured satin, pantaloons and pumps, and blue coats with brass buttons gilt.

I was glad as I looked at myself in the glass, and brushed up my hair above my forehead into a "topping," as Mr. Bassegio called that conical triumph of the decorative art, to think that I looked a little pale.

Mundy had called on me the day after this extraction, not knowing a word of the matter, and wondering why I did not look in at the billiard-rooms. I made a rather painful effort, for I was lying on my face, to get into a more natural position, which I did with a slight groan. "Wounded!" says he.

"Slightly," said I, "that is, they say it won't be dangerous."

"Oh! oh!" says he, smiling faintly down at me as I lay on my bed, with a look at once stern and knowing. "Gunshot, eh?"

I had told him on purpose, for I knew that he was intimately acquainted with the Molloy's, and I wished Theodora to hear that I was wounded; for a man hurt in an affair of honour (and what but that could she suppose?) is the most interesting patient that can come under the steel of the faculty or the cognisance of the fair.

"Gunshot," I acquiesced; for a carbine's as good a "gun" as a pistol any day; and about the "*shot*" at any rate, there could be no mistake.

"Shivering an' a daisy, as you say?" he inquired. "Looking into a barrel? Ten paces, eh?"

"I'll not deny the distance was about that," said I. "We were both slightly wounded, and — that's all. I won't talk about it; we are under terms not to tell on one another; and ask me no questions and I'll tell you no lies. Are *you* asked to the Molloy's tea-party to go to the playhouse on — next, and back again to supper?"

"Yes," says Mundy, "and I mean to go; that's as fine a blackeyed, piquey-cheeked, bouncing grenadier of a —"

"*Stop!*" said I, making a bounce to sit up, for my blood was boiling; but I was not equal to that change of posture yet. "If you mean Miss Theodora Molloy —" I began.

"Oh! oh! So it is there the wind sits," says he, and he laughed, "I meant old Mother Molloy, of course; don't be uneasy, my dear fellow."

We parted, notwithstanding, very good friends, and I was glad to hear that he was just going to pay them a visit in their apartments on Ormond Quay, and I knew he could not keep my little secret long from that agreeable family.

The better part of the week had passed, as you are aware, since this visit of Mundy's, and I was now on the point of setting out to enjoy the delightful evening I had been dreaming of for so long.

When my toilet was completed, I practised sitting down and standing up, which I did, perhaps, a little stiffly; still the movement was quite feasible, and I trusted to the inspiration of Theodora's presence to make it graceful.

When all was ready I took my opera-hat and got into the hackney-coach, with a great coat-of-arms, as big as a signboard, emblazoned on each door. Some judge or Lord Mayor, or other magnifico, seemed to have owned every one of them, fifty years before, and turned them adrift to batter about the town ever since. I sat down alone in my glory. It was a roomy place. Three could easily sit at a side. I wish you felt the jolting, and bobbing, and bumping. I was in no condition to enjoy it just then, and on second thought, I readjusted my pose. I kneeled down; such, for sufficient reasons, was the attitude I preferred, with my elbows on the cushion. There was room enough for changes of the sort: it was as big as a pew, a very uneasy one, you may suppose: the noise of it was enough to deafen a cannoneer for an hour after. If all the old iron and broken glass in Dublin was being tossed by madmen in frying-pans like pancakes, it could not exceed the ring and clatter and batter of that musical enclosure. They were all alike; there was no use in fretting; I wanted to be at Ormond Quay to the minute, not to lose one moment of Theodora's company, possibly to arrive first of the lot and have her all to myself before any one else should come in to bother us.

Unfortunately, my coachman was something the worse for liquor, and delayed me considerably by tumbling out of the box, which he did three times: once on his back, once on his face, and last on his knees and elbows. He had to be helped up on to the box every time, and his hat, whip, and other appurtenances collected and restored by some charitable blackguards of his acquaintance, while I, compelled to change my attitude of devotion, was stamping in my pumps and silk stockings, in my roomy prison, and swearing till I almost burst my cravat, with my "topping," my expressive face, and my fist out of the window. At length, after many hairbreadth escapes and a long and heartrending oscillation between the house ten doors above and the house ten doors below, the particular door I wanted to stop at, I was actually liberated, and ascended the narrow stairs, preceded by the maid, with my heart thumping, I verily believe, audibly. I heard people talking, and the voice of Theodora quite distinguishable from the rest. The woman did not announce my name, and I soon discovered that she was not aware that I had followed her upstairs, for she said:

"There's a little hop-o'-my-thumb of a man in the hall, if ye please, ma'am, that says you asked him to tany; but I think it's what he's a bit of a shop-boy that's come with a bill, and, if you like, I'll put him out by the lug."

I was so confused and embarrassed, and above all so anxious to put an end to the discussion, before anything past all endurance should be said, that I bolted into the room, putting on the best smile I could and stretching out my hand to Mrs. Molloy, who was next me. But the maid at the door, with arms as thick as Donnelly's, the boxer, caught me by the collar at the nape of my neck with such a sudden jerk that I fell sitting on the floor, smack, as if I was shot, and she never let go her grip, but held me half-choked, sitting bolt upright, with my legs out, pumps and pantaloons, like a pair of compasses.

"How dare ye!" says the powerful maid, giving me a shake that made my teeth chatter. "How dare ye, dare ye, dare ye!"

I think she'd have pulled me down the stairs backwards, sitting as I was, only that Mrs. Molloy recovered her speech, and with a stamp on the floor that made the tea-spoons jump in their saucers, she bawled out, "My curse on you, Juggy Hanlon, what are you doing to Mr. Dooley, my most sincere friend? Up with ye, Mr. Dooley, and I hope you're nothing the worse, and down with you, Juggy Hanlon, and my curse go along wid ye, to the kitchen. Take a chair and an air of the fire, Mr. Dooley, the evening's a trifle cold, I think; and settle your cravat at the glass there between the windows, and we won't look at ye — bad luck to her impudence. Here's my daughter Theodora, waiting to shake hands wid ye; but she won't look at ye no more than myself till ye settle your waistcoat and cravat; it's a wonder of the world she didn't make smithereens of your watch. She's *cruel* strong, that same Juggy Hanlon!"

I did as I was bid; I was so confounded I could hardly see my own reflection in the dingy little pier-glass. I saw in the background the images of other people indistinctly, and I heard a sound of voices, but I could not say at the time whether they were laughing at me or what they were doing.

In another minute I was shaking hands with everyone that would shake hands with me, and with some of them, I dare say, twice over at least. I was beginning to feel more like myself. It was not a very large party: Mundy was there, and Lieutenant Kramm — Sidebotham was on duty, but expected to get off in time to come to supper — there was an impudent little Galway chap, no bigger than myself, with a smirk on his red face, and a pair of calves, I give you my honour, as round as a hat, paying attentions, if you please, to Miss Theodora Molloy. I don't think he was a day under forty! With half an eye I saw what he was

at. If you caught a stranger driving your only horse and new gig to the Howth races, or walking down Dame Street in your best hat, with your umbrella in his hand, you might conceive, in a small way, the feelings with which I witnessed the usurpation in question. I had no idea until that moment how entirely I had come to regard Theodora as my own. I think I could have cut his ugly little head off his shoulders, and kicked it through the window into the Liffey.

"I must introjuice you to my sinsare friend—"

"The O'Kelly of Ballynamuck," whispered the gentleman from Galway, who knew his weakness.

"Mr. Dooley—"

"Toole" I whispered.

"Well, ain't it all one? Mr. Toole, I beg leave to introjuice yon both. Mr. Toole, this is The O'Kelly of Ballynamuck. The O'Kelly of Ballynamuck, this is Mr. Toole."

"Proud to make your acquaintance," said The O'Kelly, with a fierce sort of curtsy, that made me think that he, also, instinctively smelt a rat.

"Your most obedient, sir," said I, making him an awful low bow, and, raising my head higher than usual, I treated him at the end of it to a short, fierce stare; with another short bow at the end of that again.

"Fine weather, sir! uncommon fine, Mr. Toole. Everything promises amazing; though, of course, it don't agree with everything alike. If this weather houlds a little longer I wouldn't wonder if we had piteeties at three-halfpence!"

"Indeed, sir!" said I, expressing more wonder than I altogether felt, for I wasn't quite sure whether the sum he named was wonderfully high or wonderfully low. "Do you play billiards, sir?"

"No, sir; cards and cock-fightin' serves my turn. But what is cards and what is cock-fightin' compared with the delightful societee of neecture's noblest work, the object of our aspirations, our homage, and our life's devotion — the fair sex?"

And with this he made a flourish with his hat, and a bow to Miss Theodora, the like of which I could hardly hope to execute in half a life, with such a smile of conceit and assurance, and, I may say; of defiance, as almost drove me out of my senses, and down he went, with a whisk, into the chair next hers, and began to talk love and nonsense into her ear, under my very nose! Every now and then, I could see from the comers of his eye he gave me a look as much as to say, "I have her, and I mean to keep her; and don't you wish you may get her?"

"That fellow's disposed to put a quarrel on me," said I to myself; "*let him; if he don't, maybe I'll put one upon him.*"

I dare say I looked a little bit surly, for Mrs. Molloy plucked me by the coat, and said: "Sit down at the table, here, beside me and take a hot cup of tay, and a cut o' that pittaytee-cake; and may I never! but ye look as if ye saw your tailor's ghost with a bill in his fingers. Sit down now, I tell you," and the imperious old lady pulled me down on the chair with a souse. "And here's for you; that's stingo; drink it, my child; and cream in it that will make you as fat as a pig."

I think in her youth Mrs. Molloy must have been very nearly as strong as Juggy Hanlon: I felt perfectly helpless in the hands of either. In deep dudgeon I swallowed lumps of potato-cake and gulped down tea, talking rather vaguely with old Mrs. Molloy, and watching Theodora and The O'Kelly of Ballynamuck with the corner of my eye.

"I see how it is, my poor little fellow," says Mrs. Molloy, with a kind wink at me, "but don't bother you head about him. "Mickey Kelly there," and she winked at me again, and jogged her elbow in the direction of The O'Kelly, "can't come to the playhouse tonight; he's going to Killcock to sell a mare, and he's the boy that can do it. So Theodora 'll have no one to look after her but yourself and them officers, and I leave her among you, and I think I know who'll be foremost. We leave that dear girl, me and Molloy there, just to do whatever she likes best herself. What time of day is it, Molloy?"

Old Molloy obediently grasped the seals of his huge silver watch, and hauled it, with several tugs, from the recesses of his fob.

"Why then, it's time the coaches was at the door," says Mrs. Molloy, in a tone of brisk alarm, having heard his report. "Bing the bell, some o' yez, like darlin's. Where's that Juggy Hanlon? Don't be affeard, Mr. Dooley," she interpolated to me, with a momentary playfulness, "she shan't lay a finger on you. Call two coaches, Juggy, and don't be while ye'd be lookin' about ye — mind. Bun in and get ready, Theo, my child." And she added more vehemently to her helpmate, "Shake them crumbs off your smallclothes, Mr. Molloy, and, for dacency's sake, will ye wipe that butter off your chin."

So issuing her orders in hot haste, Mrs. Molloy fussed, and wheezed, and bustled about. Mundy was arranging his curls, and smiling blandly at his handsome features in the looking-glass; and Lieutenant Kramm was entertaining old Molloy with terrific anecdotes of his sporting and military life; and The O'Kelly was taking his leave with all the fascination and gallantry that belonged to his courtly manners. From the window I saw him get into a battered gig, and drive off at a hideous pace, pretty much at the mercy of a mad-looking horse, in a westerly direction. That redfaced thief made me very uneasy; and you may be sure it wasn't altogether about his neck I was anxious.

Well, he was gone; that was one comfort. I shook myself up, and strutted from one window to another, and Mrs. Molloy's words and looks of encouragement came back, and I began to think if a little beast like that chooses to pin himself to a girl's apron-string, what is she to do? I dare say she hated the old whisky-faced rascal as much as I did; and didn't she give me a smile over her shoulder as she left the room!

My spirits rose. I was glad to observe that Mundy, who was six feet high and wore a red coat — decisive odds — was not in the running; and Kramm was directing his attentions chiefly to the old people. The opportunity would, after all, prove as fortunate as my wildest hopes had painted it.

In a few minutes more we were rolling and rattling away to the theatre. Mrs. Molloy distinguished Kramm and Mundy by placing herself under their escort, and starting first, with a tipsy coachman and a horse that had a morbid jerk in one of its legs, and seemed at every fifth step to be on the point of pitching, with a curtsy, on its head. Away they went in full fig, merrily, in this conveyance; Mrs. Molloy, as proud as a peacock to take her seat in the box next his Excellency, the Lord Lift'nant! I, old Molloy, and the lovely Theodora, whom I keep to the last, as children do their best bit, followed in our jingling, thundering, rolling coach, and in a few minutes down slammed the steps in front of the box-entrance, and I had the happiness of giving my arm to the beautiful girl I had never ceased thinking of since I saw her for the first time, in the barouche, outside the pickle-shop on Stephen's Green. Can I ever forget it!

Here we are now, all in our glory, under the blaze of the lamps. Mrs. Molloy's turban, or, as she persisted in calling that sort of coiffure, to her dying day, her "turbot," was the finest thing in green, yellow, and pink that night in the playhouse, with a big pin — I suppose they were precious stones — stuck in the front of it; her dress was of corresponding magnificence. At that time ladies wore next to no waists at all, and their clothes were made almost as tight as bolster-cases, if you just suppose a bit of string all round tied tight, and as close under the arm-pits as anatomy would permit. Whatever advantages this style of dress had, I think it was rather trying to persons of Mrs. Molloy's figure, and was calculated, with uncommon candour, to display every pound of flesh she boasted. She had three necklaces on, and a roll of fat for every one, and a pair of Roman-pearl pendants, that were as big as duck-eggs, and kept swinging and knocking on her inflamed shoulders whenever she turned her head. I will say this for Mrs. Molloy, that for her time of life she was as showy and plentiful a figure, and as roomy a woman as you could wish to fill a window with on a Lord Mayor's Day; and this night, in the front row of the box, next his Excellency, she was looking her very best, and, I dare say, a more striking figure than the Lord Lieutenant himself.

Mrs. Molloy was so anxious to get next the Lord Lieutenant, and her daughter to get as far as possible from Mrs. Molloy that Mundy and I were put side by side in the middle, Miss Theodora on my right, and the old lady on Mundy's left next the viceregal box. I remember the arrangement well, because we were hardly in our places, and I saying something engaging to Miss Theodora Molloy, sitting as I was side by side with my friend the lieutenant, when a fellow in the gallery calls out, "Three cheers for *Mundy* and his man *Friday*," and three cheers followed that made the lustres tremble.

This you may be sure made me feel rather fidgetty, more especially as who should I see but that blackguard young Figges, and all his malevolent family, grinning and sniggering away in a front row, only a box or two off. He was watching me, and laughing, you'd say, for a wager, and bursting with spite.

I was as sure as could be, of a thing I did not actually see, that the sneaking rascal had sent a lot of his shop-boys into the upper gallery to make fun of me before the people. Of course he saw my name down and who I was with when he went to take his places.

It was a terrible unlucky thing. It was putting me out. I could not hear half she said; and two or three times I was very near talking nonsense.

In a minute more another chap calls out from the gallery: "A cheer for the big soger with the little *hyacinth* in his buttonhole," and off goes another cheer.

Well, this blew over like the last, leaving me feeling rather small and blushing all over. But I did not pretend to think they meant me, and went on talking all the same, thinking the overture would never begin, and the curtain go up to put me out of pain.

Then there comes a thundering cheer for Mr. Toole, in the box next his Excellency, and I saw the Figgesses tittering.

No matter, I was determined to keep neverminding, and to talk on to that beautiful girl as if nothing in the world was going the least bit wrong.

"May I make bold," says I, "to ask you, Miss Molloy, how long it is since you and Mr. O'Kelly were first acquainted?"

"And why should you care a brass farthing, Mr. Toole, to know?" says she, looking as innocent and startled-like as a little frightened bird. "Sure there's no harm in poor little Micky O'Kelly!"

"No harm, I dare say, and not much good," said I; "but whatever he is I envy him, Miss Molloy, and lament all the precious time I have lost."

I said this, you may be sure, as tenderly as I could.

"I hope you're gettin' on with her, Mr. Toole," calls out a fellow affectionately from the gallery.

"Never mind," says another, "he's the boy that'll *melt* her soon." I felt my very cheeks tingling with shame. There was another cheer, and those accursed Figgesses grinning. Well, it could not last for ever, I thought. "Will those beastly fiddlers never begin?" I thought. "Is there no one else in the house to make fun of hut me? Will I ever be out o' this, dead or alive?"

The house was now filling fast; the box-doors were opening and clapping; a human flood was oozing and tumbling into the pit from every entrance. The gallery was becoming more noisy every minute; the orchestra were assembling, were chatting together, turning over music, and tuning violins, double-basses, and all sorts of instruments. There was a cheer for "Nosey," which was the nickname of the "leader" of those days. There was the usual "groan for the man in the white hat," and call for "music," and two or three fruits, small and hard, of that popular kind which were displayed by the vendors at the corner of Carlisle Bridge, in old japped snuffer-dishes, and offered from 11 o'clock, A.M., to sunset, with inviting monotony, in the words, "Fourteen scarlet *craftons* for a halfpenny," hit a hat or two in the pit, and one sounded the big drum with a spirit that made the accomplished drummer start, and drew upon him a glance of indignation from "Nosey," now upon his throne. These "fine scarlet *craftons*," as I knew from experience, were as cheap and convenient an ammunition as a man could take with him to the upper gallery, when he wished to take half-an-hour's innocent diversion with bald heads in the pit. Only two or three came down now; but they were "like the first of a thunder-shower," as Lord Byron says, and I knew they were signs of the coming storm.

And now, on a sudden, every one in the house stood up, the orchestra struck up "God save the King." The Lord Lieutenant was taking his place in state, in the box next ours, and such a storm of clapping, cheering, hooting, groaning, hissing, whacking of sticks on the front of the gallery, whistling, cat-calls, and other sounds rose all at once, as made the music totally inaudible, and deafened the entire audience for a time. During the whole of this period, while we could see by the elbows and fiddlesticks of the orchestra that the national anthem was still being played, much to my chagrin, I saw Mrs. Molloy, in whom I felt an interest, reflected from her lovely daughter, and a responsibility though not quite so near as Mundy's, behaving herself in a manner that, I confess, scandalised me a good deal; for, with her side and shoulder on the cushion of our box, she contrived to get her face round the partition of his Excellency's, and indeed, I may say, pretty well into it. One of her objects had been to get a good look at that dignified personage. I could soon perceive that she was engaged in a violent altercation with some one in the viceregal box, in which her face was, I may say, established.

I thought I could distinguish in her powerful voice an allusion to the well-known privilege that cats enjoy, of looking at kings; but, except the constant and vehement nodding of her turban, I could see nothing of what was going on in the state box.

Tom Barnacle was in the pit, a little way out, and told me next day all he saw; and from that and Mrs. Molloy's narrative, I can relate that when her face presented itself considerable surprise and even consternation appeared in the countenances of those members of the household that were stationed in the rear of "his Excellency," who looked straight before him, as if unconscious of the appearance of the disk that had risen so unexpectedly on his horizon.

Mrs. Molloy nodded repeatedly to "his Excellency," and smiled affably, assuring him that she was proud to see him there, and that Molloy himself and her daughter being in the next box she did not think it would be manners if some one of the family did not wish his Excellency health, wealth, long life, and prosperity, which she did with a *cead mille failthe* from the heart of a Connaught woman, and the *boosom* of Ireland.

His Excellency, she complained afterwards, did not appear to hear what she was saying— "them ignorant blackguards were making such a noise" — but as the speech exhibited no symptoms of drawing towards its close, one of the gentlemen, in Castle uniform, stepped forward, and said with very marked distinctness: "Unless you withdraw your face, a constable shall take you from the next box, and convey you to the watch-house."

It was upon this that Mrs. Molloy, who had a "spent" befitting her ancient lineage, had retorted in high and scornful terms upon the "gentleman-at-large," who looked as if he would have liked to take by the throat that turbaned Turk; and it was not until she saw him, as she thought, make a sign to some one, in the rear of the box, that her prudence overcame her indignation, and, with a face of flame and many a sniff and snort, she resumed her original pose, and stared fiercely across at the side-scene opposite, and her gills palpitated for half an hour afterwards.

The frightful discord with which the representative of majesty was received, foreboded the political storm that was brewing.

'Macbeth' was the play, and my troubles, to return from great things to small, were not over yet, for when the witches came on, and the cauldron appeared, a chap calls out from the gallery: "The boiling-pot, Mr. Toole."

I felt it the more that there was a dead silence in the house at the moment. And when the smoke began to come up, and the witches said:

"Double, double, toil and trouble;
Fire, burn; and, cauldron, bubble."

"Melting-day, Toole," says another. And when Macbeth said:

"Out, out, brief candle."

There was a roar of "Short sixes."

I give you my sacred honour, I felt as if I was melting myself. I'd have liked to stand up that minute and tell the whole world I was a chandler. There's nothing on earth so torturing as a mystery, with a lot of fellows, that know all about it, poking it under your nose every minute in the presence of a great assembly.

Between the acts, it was one succession of groans, and hisses, and political sentiments, and it was plain that the Lord Lieutenant and the government bigwigs were in ill odour with the gallery. It was just when Macbeth was on the point of murdering King Duncan, a chap among the gods called out, by way of a joke: "God save the King," and with that another calls for "Patrick's Day," and then the whole gallery round set up one roar for "Patrick's Day," and nothing could you hear but "Patrick's Day — Patrick's Day," in one thunder; you'd think the ceiling would come down. And out comes the manager, and stood bowing in front of the footlights, turning up his eyes to the gods, and Nosey waiting for a signal from him to strike up the tune they wanted. He made no sign; the clamour rose awfully; he smiled, he shrugged, he bowed very low, he expanded his white gloves imploringly, as he slowly looked from one side to the other of the gallery. All would not do; they would not give him a hearing. The manager went off, bowing and smiling regretfully, and he sent on Lady Macbeth to proceed, if she could; but the storm was rising steadily, and even that royal virago was forced to submit: Lady Macbeth curtsied low, and in turn withdrew. Again the manager came forward. He gesticulated before the gentlemen in the gallery, conveying as well as he could that their demands were complied with; he stepped forward to the footlights, signed to Nosey, who rapped on his desk with his fiddlestick, and waved that wand of power over his musical familiars, and it was to be supposed the tune, so tumultuously demanded, was at last being executed by the full strength of Nosey's band; but, of course, not a note could any one hear in the house. The magic of "Patrick's Day" was powerless to abate the storm. That quarrel was but a pretext: there was something deeper in it. The manager bowed very low, and a sucked orange hit him on the head. At the same moment a whisky-bottle, from the upper gallery, hit the front of the Lord Lieutenant's box, and a shower of glass splinters flew in all directions. Now there were gentlemen standing up in the boxes, and gesticulating fiercely at the gallery; box-doors were opened and peaceable people were drawing back and some getting out on the corridors; the same agitation was visible in the pit. Smash goes another bottle on the side of the viceregal box.

The Viceroy, being a plucky man, continued to sit serenely with his eyes on the stage. Old Molloy popped his bald head out to see what was going on, and instantly, not a scarlet "crafton," but one of those big, yellow apples that were called cannon-balls — never did they better deserve their name — burst with a thump on his shining bald head, a bit of it, as big as a walnut, hit me in the eye, exactly as I was saying, with a look of unutterable love in the unfortunate eye that I had fixed on her: "Dear Miss Theodora, fear nothing; am not I beside you?" Some pulp marked the spot where it had hit her papa, and a "noggin" of cider was streaming over his massive forehead and intelligent eyes, and I dare say old Molloy thought, for a minute, he was back again on the fair green of Ballynawhop.

If we had known that the Lord Lieutenant's box was likely to become the mark for all this artillery, I doubt if Mrs. Molloy would have been in such a hurry to secure the place of honour.

"Papa dear, are ye hurted?" Miss Theodora exclaimed with much trepidation; and "Oh, la! There's mamma!" And sure enough a cat had at that moment alighted with great directness on the head of Mrs. Molloy, whirling her tasteful turban and wig over her left cheek, and displaying instead a head as bald as her husband's. A live cat, bedad! If it had dropped into the box among us, Saint Peter would not have kept *me* in it an instant! Luckily it tumbled off Mrs. Molloy's turban, head over heels among the groundlings in the pit. Grasping her wig and turban with both hands she rose exclaiming, "Take me out of this hell upon earth some of ye."

At the same instant the Lord Lieutenant, having made up his mind to retire, rose with much dignity, and received a large lemon on his back; and I myself saw a mutton kidney in the eye of the Attorney-General, in the box opposite to ours.

It was indeed high time for all who had ladies to look after to beat a retreat, and we were soon in the corridor, and making our way down the stairs. Theodora was on my arm. I was afraid she might faint before we got her into the coach.

"Are you ill?" I whispered, squeezing her arm gently to the lapel of my coat with my elbow. "I hope you were not very much frightened?"

Upon this the channing girl treated me to a dazzling stare of her fine black eyes, and burst out laughing.

"Ah! Then, is it what you're jokin' me, you are, Mr. Toole?" says she. "Afeard, indeed! I wish you saw the stones and claealpins hoppin' on and off the boys' polls at the Fair of Killbatterry. Ha, ha! Papa's nothing the worse, ye see; and, indeed, the smack of it took a start out of me, for I only saw it with the corner of my eye, and I could not tell but it was a paving-stone was in it, and the pulp flying out alarmed me for a moment for the dear man's brains. And mamma got it, too; that was a cat, or my name's not Theodora. Mamma! Who's she with? Oh, Mundy, I see. Mamma, dear, how's your head?"

"Bad enough, joole," rejoined Mrs. Molloy. My beautiful turbot's rooned and smathered on my head!"

The people who looked round to see who the speaker was who had suffered in so unusual a way, beheld Mrs. Molloy with old Molloy's red and yellow silk pocket-handkerchief tied under her chin, holding her wig and turban down in their place, and looking, certainly, not unlike that class of ladies who used to carry flat-fish on their heads, and certainly I did feel a little bashful about her, for one side of her wig was dangling from under Molloy's handkerchief between her shoulders, and the Figgesses, who were coming down the stairs behind us, were laughing like hyænas. I don't think there was an unlucky thing happened to us that night but the eyes of that same beastly family were upon us.

I was thankful when Mrs. Molloy was shut up in her hack coach, and her daughter, her husband, and myself in ours.

We had all recovered our spirits by the time we had reached our destination on Ormond Quay. Up the stairs we stumbled, talking all together, and into the front drawingroom, where Juggy Hanlon *had* already lighted candles. Mrs. Molloy slipped quietly upstairs to restore her distracted head to order, while we talked on in the room where we had first mustered, and we could hear the servants tramping up and down the back drawingroom, clinking plates, and jingling spoons and knives and forks, and squabbling in loud and voluble accents over the arrangement of the supper.

"Mr. Lieutenant Kramm has just been telling me, Miss Theodora, that your music is all that I should have anticipated," said I, "would it be asking too great a favour from a nightingale to sing us a song from the perch of that music-stool, and to accompany itself with a few harmonious touches of that forte-piano?"

I give you this pretty speech in full, to show you how much pains I was taking to gain the beautiful creature's heart.

"Lieutenant Kramm says more than his prayers, I'm afraid," says she, sitting down carelessly before the instrument. "Not that I sing like a nightingale, for I know very well that I don't."

But she looked all the time as if she thought that she did.

"You don't sing like the nightingale in this one respect," said I, "that you excel it beyond all calculation."

"I don't mind a word you're saying, Mr. Toole; I think it's what you want to make a fool of me," said the young lady.

"Miss Molloy does not sing like the nightingale for *all* listeners," says Kramm, "only for her particular friends."

"That's it, I *hope*," said I, "and I devoutly entreat that I may be included among the number."

"Sing that glorious thing you astonished me with the other morning," said Mundy, joining the chorus of supplication. "If you don't, I'll beg of Mr. Molloy to use his influence as a father."

"Well, then, I suppose I may as well," says she. I'll sing you one of Tommy Moore's melodies."

And, by the powers, so she did! She struck up on the piano, and I was delighted and, I do assure you, half-frightened by the power of her voice. Since I heard old "Whisky Tay" in the black-hole I had never listened to anything in the way of music half so loud! She had a way of throwing her voice into the words and swelling them out, that I never heard equalled; and when she came to the part:

"The mo-hoon hid her li-*hight*,
In the heavens that *ni-hi-hight*,
And wept behind a clou-*houd*,
O'er the maiden's shee-aim."

I was perfectly ravished.

"More power! My blessing! May I never, but that *teas* singing!" said I, in a state of extraordinary enthusiasm; and I do assure you I hardly knew whether I was on my head or my heels. "Thank you! *thank you!!* THANK YOU!!!" I cried with growing fervour. "God bless you, my darling Miss Theodora, that was astonishing!"

Mundy was laughing all this time with a "Ha! ha! ha!" and no more disguise than he would at a clown in a circus.

"What are you laughing at, Mundy?" said J, turning on him as if I'd eat him up, with a stamp on the floor, for which I afterwards apologised to Miss Molloy, for it raised such a dust between me and Mundy I could scarcely see him, and I heard the young lady blowing and phewing, and slapping her hair with her pocket-handkerchief; and old Molloy was taken with a fit of coughing.

"*Laughing!*" says Mundy. "Ha! ha! ha! phew! I say, where's the good of smothering us? Ha! ha! ha! why, man, I tell you it is — ha! ha! ha! — hys-sis-sis-sisterical — ha! ha! ha! I can't help it, I tell you, I — ha! ha! ha! — have a sort of trembling inside whenever I'm very much moved. Miss Molloy knows all about it. Don't be a fool; I told her long ago. I've had it on parade, and at funerals, and at divine service, by Jove, and I'll not be cross-questioned, nor bamboozled, nor made more nervous by any man living. *You* believe me, Miss Molloy, and that's all I care about."

"Ah! Be quiet, Toole, will ye?" It was the first time she called me by my surname, and I felt so happy I could have forgiven Mundy if he had pulled me by the nose. "It's true for him; he does really — he laughs whenever he's near cryin'. It happened to myself once, when I was getting well o' the swine-pock. Sure didn't I — see the way he was over the beautiful verses my poor Uncle Barney wrote, when he was leaving Ireland in a decline, and he called the pome a 'Farewell to Allyballycarick-o-dooley,' which was the name of his place, and there's hardly one in the world could read it without crying; and I give you my word, it was from one split of laughing with him into another! Not but what I think it would be better manners if he ran his head in a pittaytie-pot, and clapped it out o' the windy, sooner than offend people by his weakness, when he felt the fit cornin' on him," she concluded, with a little severity.

The discussion was ended at this point by the return of Mrs. Molloy, with her second best wig and "turbot" on her head; and just as we were going into supper in came Sidebotham. His eye was little more than sky-blue and yellow now, and a small slip of black plaster, instead of the bit of basilicon, as big as a turnpike-ticket, that was stuck across the bridge of his nose. He was not by any means so stand-off with me as when I last met him, and seemed disposed to be conciliatory, and indeed he went the length of borrowing five pounds from me as we went away.

I don't know how we bundled in to supper. I only know that I found myself beside Theodora. It was really an elegant supper. I remember it well, and I may as well tell you that old Molloy had a loin of roast pork before him; there was a big square of bacon, with greens, before Sidebotham — we were running, you see, a good deal on the pigs; before Mrs. Molloy, and as fat as herself, there was a grand roast goose, that came all the way from Connaught, and more fool it, considering all the good it got by the journey! And there was cow-heel and tripe, a dish that old Molloy fondly lost himself in, whenever he could get at it. There was enough cold-cannon to load a hod with; potatoes with and without the skins; there was a mountain of pancakes you might put a child to bed on; and such a good smell of stuffing, and onions, and gravy over all, that I declare to you I don't think the Prince Regent had a finer supper that night.

We were mortal hungry, and for a time conversation was a little dull; but I had the pleasure of hearing Theodora's beautiful voice every now and then, between the sounds of chumping, and munching, and gulping all round, calling on me for those little refined attentions that constitute, I may say, all the chivalry of the supper-table. Now it was:

"Mr. Toole, may I be troublesome to you for the gherkins?" And again —

"Another help o' the stuffin', ask mamma, Mr. Toole." Or —

"Show me the mustard, if you please?" Or —

"Will ye give me a dust of that pepper, Mr. Toole?"

I do assure you it was one delightful round of similar requests and attentions all through the supper-time, and as the glorious girl had a fine appetite, she worked me, in that way, to my heart's content.

But this was only child's play compared with what followed, when the old lady called out "Come, Molloy, where's the punch? What are you foosthering about? We're all choking with the drooth, and lookin' at ye like so many dying fishes out o' water. There's Mr. Upside —"

"Sidebotham," said the lieutenant.

"Upsidedownbotham — well, whatever it is, the young captain there, that we knew in Athlone, is makin' signs to me this half hour for drink. Come, man, stir. Juggy, good girl, bring the *kittle*; there's two bottle of the right sort at your elbow, and half a dozen elegant lemons. *Putt* down the bowl before him, Juggy, that's a darlint, and don't be sousing the wather in as if you were drowning so many rats. Do you know what, Mr. Upside, Mr. Downbotham, that's it; just look at that bowl — it houlds seven pints and about a wine-glass; that's the very bowl Molloy was baptized in!" And she nodded impressively at Sidebotham, just as Molloy squeezed a lemon into the sacred vessel. "As sore as you sit there, Mr. Back — what your name? — no matter, I wish there was no such things as names, barrin' Christian names, of course, for the sake of religion; but what was I saying? Yes; he was baptized in that very bowl!"

"Not *ducked* in it?" says Sidebotham.

"No; but sprinkled out of it by the Reverend Father Haddock."

"He drank like a fish, I dare say, ma'am," said Sidebotham, who didn't care a fig what he said to any one.

"I don't know, my dear, but he baptized like a Christian; and he met his death, most unfortunately, by being drowned in a bog-hole. He being a portly man, standing too near the edge, the bank gave way, and himself, and a child, and an ass and cart was all drowned together. I remember seeing him myself."

"Not in the bog-hole?" said the lieutenant.

"No, honey! It was in the high street of Athlone, when I was only a little slip of a colleen."

"We must drink to his memory, ma'am," said Sidebotham.

"With all my heart, joole," said Mrs. Molloy, who, barring a few political toasts, did not object to drink to anything.

By this time the punch, one of the few good things we unquestionably owe to England, was brewed; and infinite credit it did its "composer."

Our Philomel was the only one of the party who partook of that wonderful elixir with extreme moderation. That nightingale only touched it lightly, as it were, with her musical beak, once or twice, and, content with this little sip, listened to our agreeable conversation, our toasts, and sentiments, and to a great deal of fiery and confidential nonsense from your humble servant.

After this, I can recall nothing distinctly, except the general consciousness that I never was so happy in the course of my life; only I once or twice observed that Kramm, who sat at Theodora's other side, and did not seem to hear a word I said, kept interrupting the girl with his long-winded stories; and then I remember Sidebotham seeing me home, and talking to him a great

deal about Theodora, and something very touching was said that affected me, for I remember crying while he held my hand, and I held the railings, and I lent him some money, and how I got to my bed I don't know.

[This amusing story, by the gifted author of 'Uncle Silas' and 'In a Glass Darkly,' was left at the time of the author's death unfinished as it is here, but the Editor ventures nevertheless to give it in this state to the readers of 'TEMPLE Bar.' Humour is not a product of this furiously earnest age, and we cannot afford to lose any contribution to our mirth which comes in our way.
— EDITOR.]